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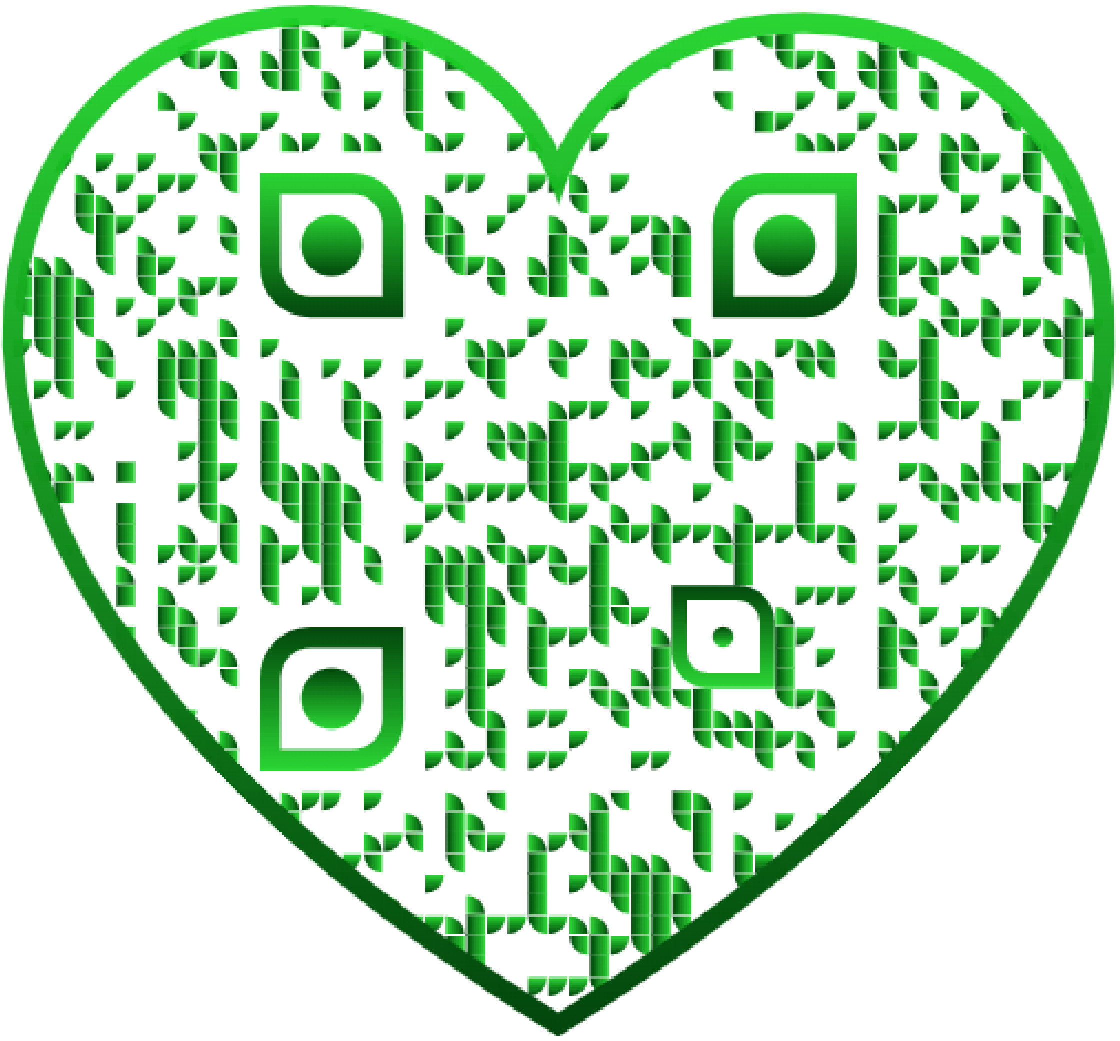

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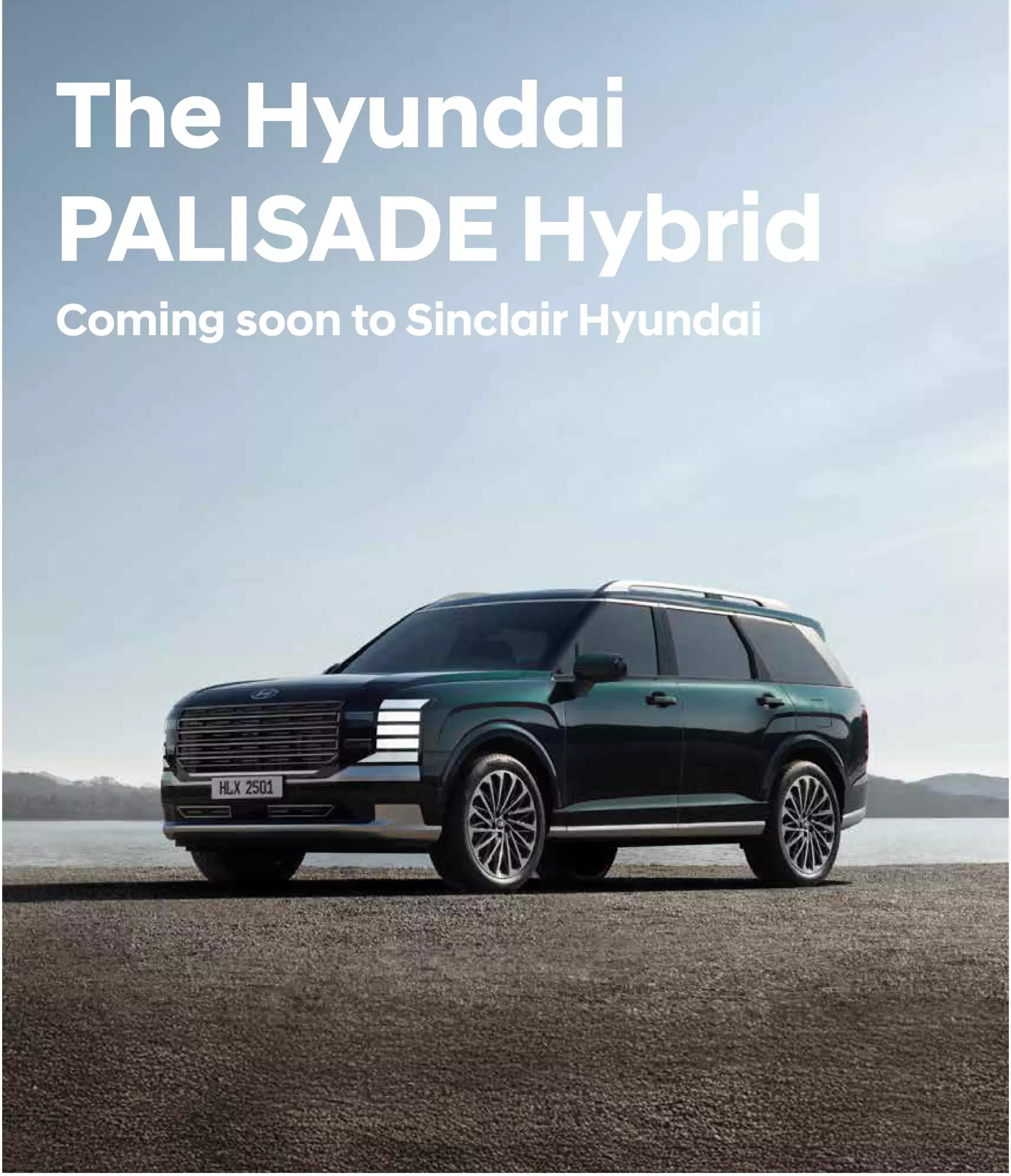

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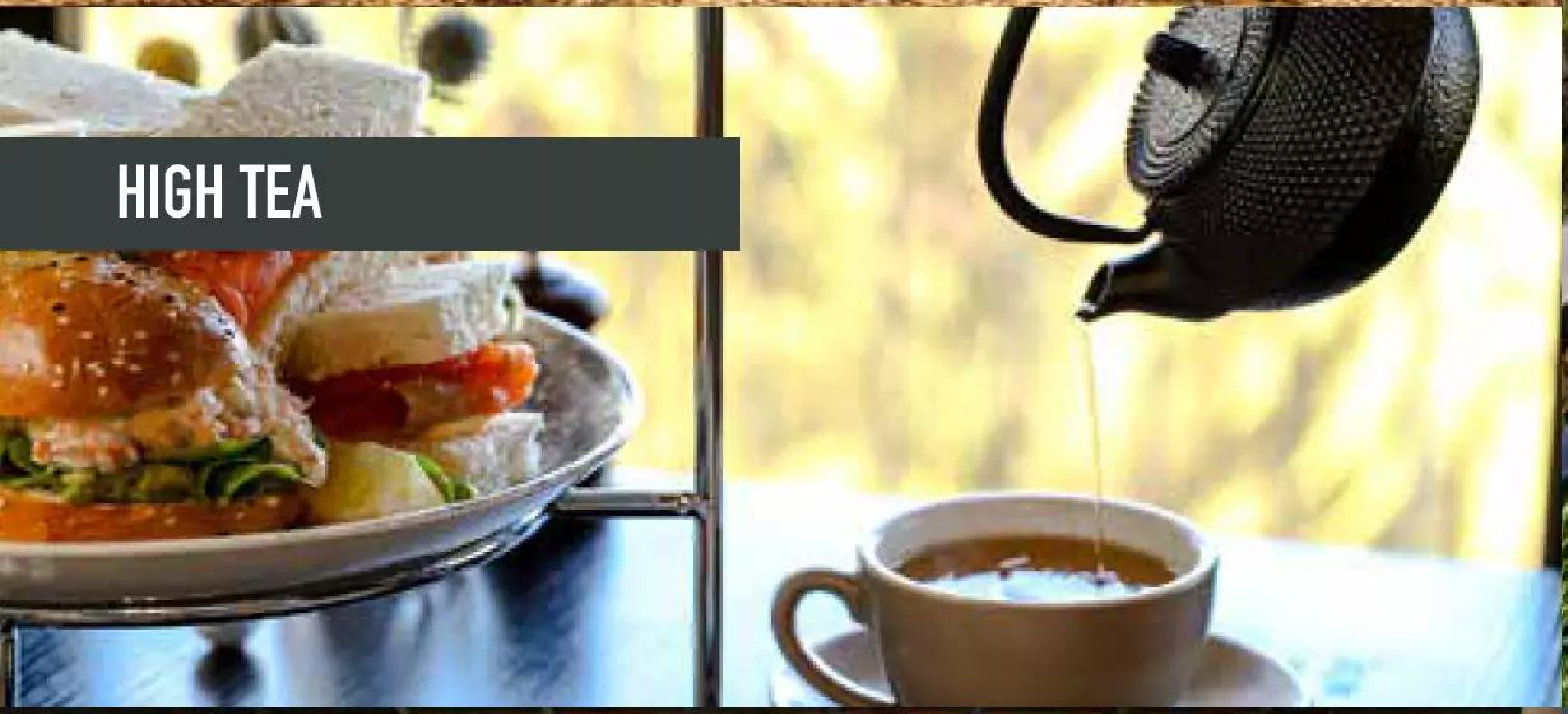
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Cutcliffe
Acreage & Lifestyle

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176 Grose Wold Road, Grose Wold 4 ha 5 🛏 2 🛁 5 🚗

Resting quietly behind a grove of mature gums, this timeless country homestead offers peaceful family living across four hectares of gently undulating land. Tucked away in a boutique rural enclave and set well back from the road, the home enjoys serene views across a lake-like, spring-fed dam and park-like grounds dotted with fruiting macadamia, lemon, pomegranate, and plum trees.

Thoughtfully designed, the residence features five bedrooms and two bathrooms, with multiple living areas, including a formal lounge, rumpus, and a dedicated study. At the heart of the home, a spacious bay-windowed open-plan kitchen, dining, and living area flows seamlessly to a wide, covered alfresco patio, perfect for entertaining or soaking up the northern light.

Comfort is assured with ducted air conditioning, ceiling fans, alarm system, ducted vacuum, and high ceilings throughout. The main bedroom, complete with a walk-in robe and ensuite, includes electric shutters for added privacy, while the home is powered by a 15.5kW solar system and supported by a 120kL water tank.

Fully fenced with electric gates and featuring a large shed with office space and carport, this idyllic estate pairs privacy with practicality in a setting made for the country lifestyle only minutes from Kurrajong village and North Richmond.

Features: - Four hectares of gently rolling land in a quiet rural setting - Set back from the road with a peaceful, private outlook - Five bedrooms, two bathrooms, plus formal and casual living - Separate study and rumpus offer extra family flexibility - Open-plan living flows to a wide, covered outdoor patio - Bay windows frame serene views across a spring-fed dam - Ducted air, ceiling fans, alarm and 9ft ceilings throughout - Main bedroom with ensuite, walk-in robe and electric shutters - 15.5kW solar system, 120kL water tank, ducted vacuum - Large shed with office and carport - Electric gates, fully fenced.

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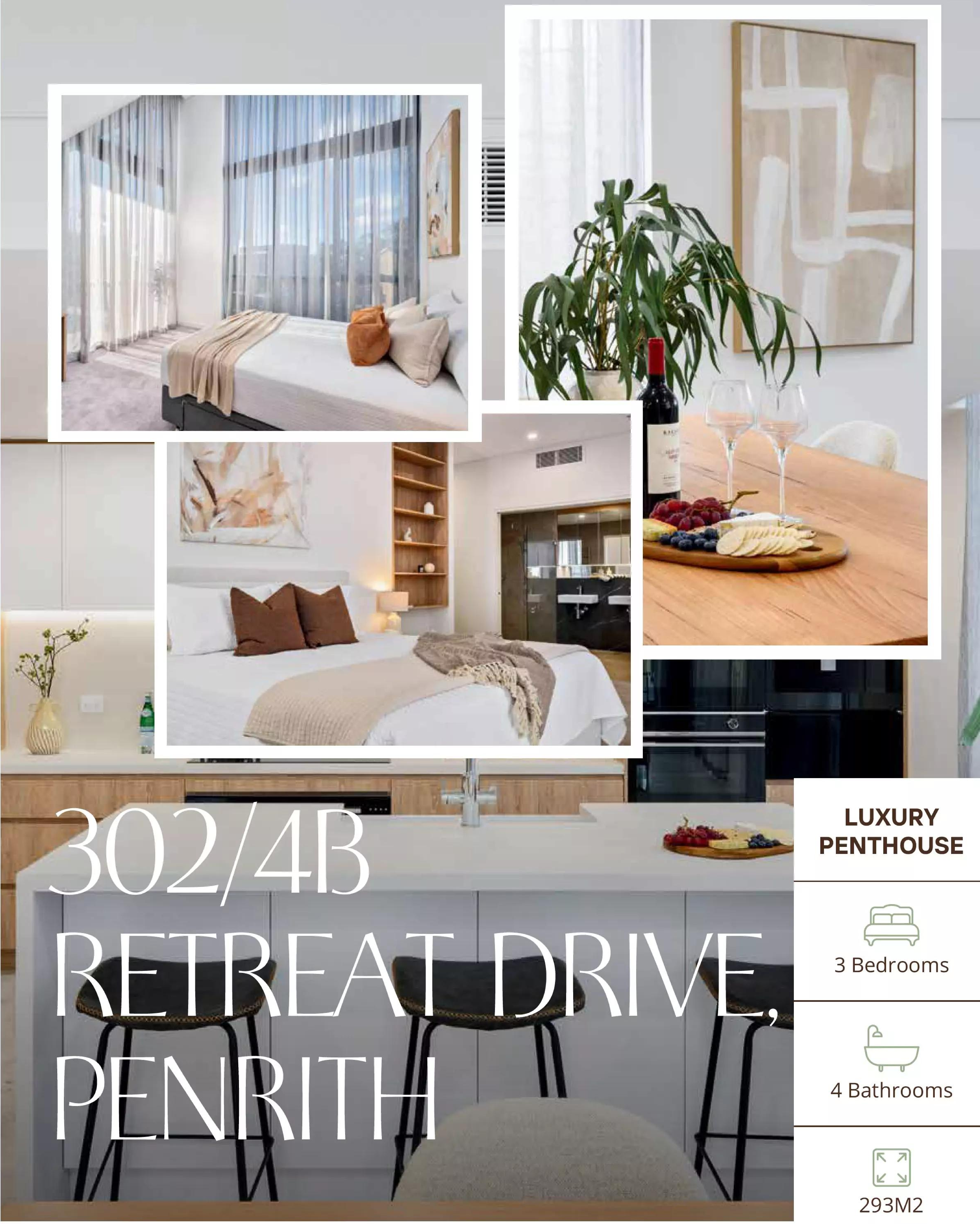
Paul Cutcliffe 0414 878 858
cutcliffe.com.au



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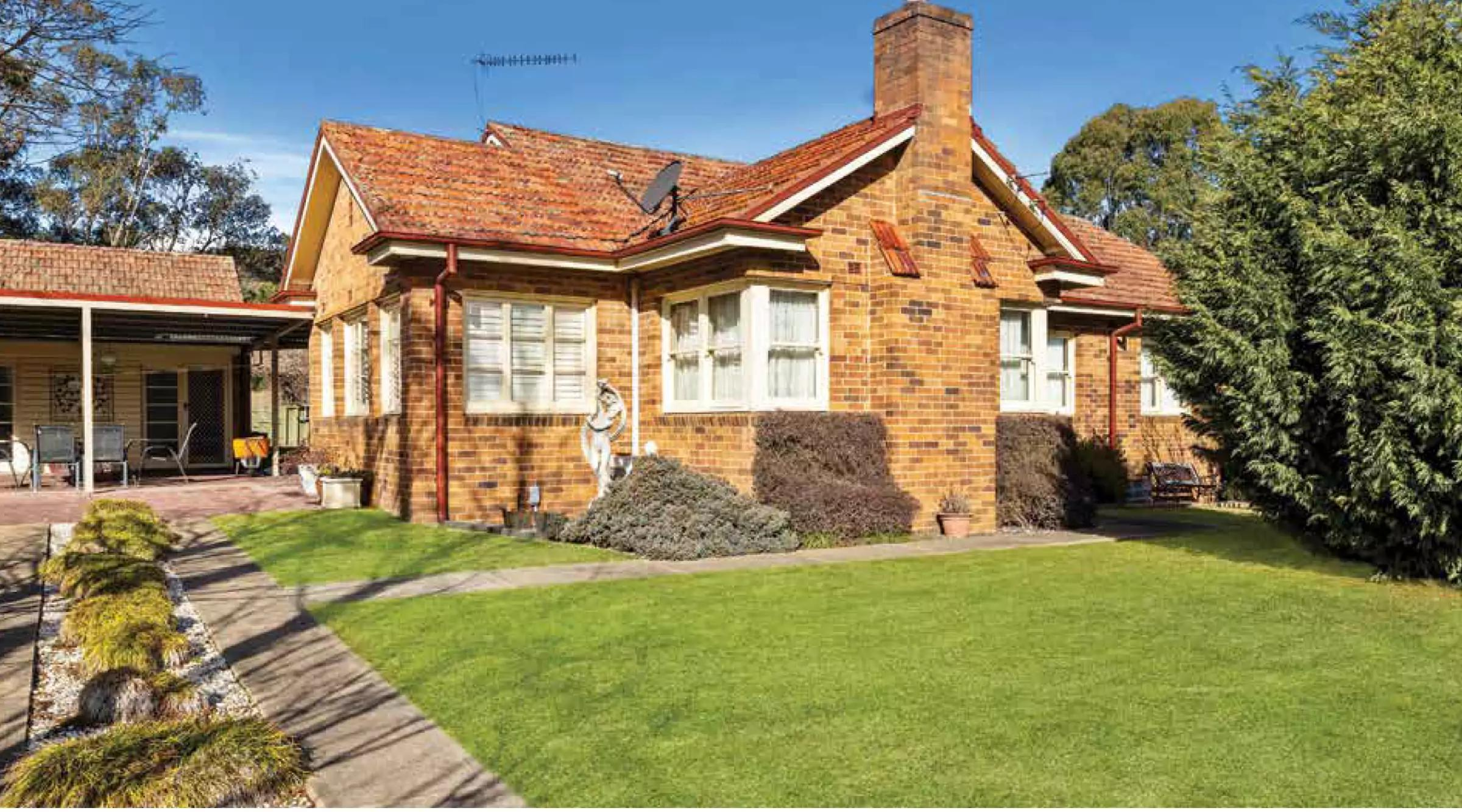

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HOME IMPROVEMENT
32

BLUE Mountainslife

Oct - Nov 2025

People

28 SECOND CHANCE
How Alejandra Martinez is reshaping the literary landscape.

30 MOUNTAINS HEART
Let's celebrate the good work of people.

Food

56 LIQUID GOLD
The power of Olive Oil can make any meal taste perfect.

House & Garden

33 LAYERS & TEXTURE
A mid-century revival in Mount Tomah.

36 PENRITH PERFECTION
A sky-high sanctuary in Penrith.

42 COUNTRY ELEGANCE
A private country escape with timeless charm.

46 COUNTRY CHARM
Your new life awaits in Cullen Bullen.

Features

50 HOME IMPROVEMENT
Be inspired and transform your house into a beautiful home.

70 SHOP LOCAL
Keep your money where you live and support local businesses.

Regular Reading

14 EVENTS
16 NEWS
20 EARTH CARE
22 LOCAL ARTS

Mountain Plus

82 HEALTH
84 BEAUTY
91 RELATIONSHIPS
90 WEDDINGS
92 TRAVEL
96 INTERIOR
98 TECHNOLOGY
100 MOTORING
105 BOOK
106 THEATRE
107 MOVIES
108 SOCIAL
110 CROSSWORD

92

96

50

108

91

The latest addition to the Chris Wolf team is Rheannon Whiteman. "I grew up in the mountains and still love working in that environment, there's something special about the connection between nature and creativity. Hairdressing has been a passion of mine since a young age, and I've always known it's what I'm meant to do. I thrive on connecting with clients through genuine conversation and helping them express themselves through their hair. I've always been inspired by the way a transformation can completely change someone's look and more importantly, their confidence. I'm always up for a challenge and love pushing myself creatively."

Chris Wolf

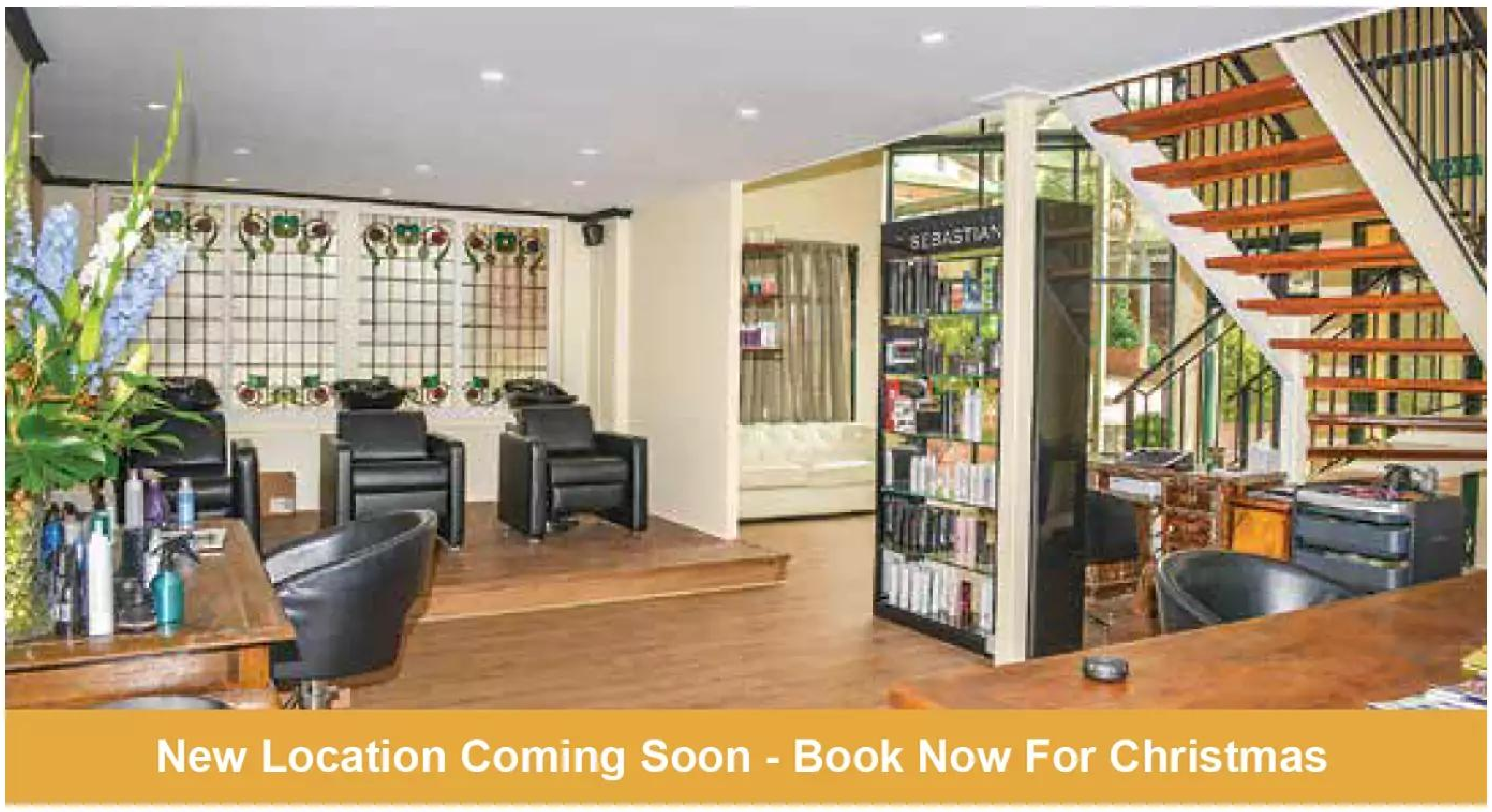
HAIR DESIGN & FINE ART

Nestled in the Charming town of Katoomba, Chris Wolf Hair Studio stands as a testament to artistry, innovations, and exceptional service. Located on Hapenny Lane, Chris Wolf Hair Studio is more than just a salon: it's an aesthetic haven. Chris Wolf's team of skilled and experienced stylists are like magicians wielding their scissors. They don't just cut hair; they sculpt it.

Caitlin: To be able to work in a creative and welcoming environment is something that is important to me and that's how it's been to work here over the years, with such a wonderful team alongside me. I take great pride and care in my work to provide clients with the high quality service they deserve, listening thoroughly to the ideas they come in with to fully understand the vision they have for their hair and what we can do to reach that. I love to pay close attention to the small details in a style, making sure that the haircut is always sitting perfectly before anyone leaves their seats. It's such an amazing feeling to be able to transform someone's hair into something they can feel comfortable and happy with. A good haircut can really change a lot about how you perceive and express yourself, and i'm glad to be a part of the experience to help others in achieving that.

Tamika: I'm a senior hairstylist based in the Hawkesbury area, with a strong passion for hairdressing that started from a young age and has only grown over the years. I love creating hairstyles and colours that not only suit my clients but also reflect the latest trends, as fashion and self-expression are a big part of who I am. My goal is to challenge myself every day, continually learning and pushing my skills to deliver the best results for every client who sits in my chair. I look forward to meeting new people, sharing ideas, and helping others feel confident and amazing through their hair.

STUNNING STYLISH STUDIO



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In a world often dominated by headlines about celebrities, scandals, and fleeting trends, it's easy to overlook the quiet champions who shape our communities with compassion, grit, and generosity. That's why the Australia Day Awards matter — not just as a ceremony, but as a civic ritual that reminds us where true greatness lies.

Each year, the local councils in our regions invite residents to nominate individuals, groups, and businesses whose contributions have made a tangible difference in the lives of others.

These are not people seeking applause. They are the volunteers who show up rain or shine, the young leaders who inspire through action, the local legends whose stories deserve to be told, and the businesses that give back without fanfare.

The award categories vary but can include — Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen, Community Group, Community Event, Local Legend, and Business Philanthropy — offering a broad canvas to honour the diverse ways people serve.

Whether it's a grassroots initiative that brought neighbours together, a youth-led campaign that sparked change, or a business that quietly funds local programs, these efforts deserve recognition.

But the awards are only as powerful as the stories we choose to tell. That's where you come in.

If you know someone whose impact ripples through your community — someone who gives without asking, leads without ego, and uplifts without condition — nominate them. Not for the sake of a trophy, but to say: "We see you. We value you. You matter."

Nominations for most councils end soon, and the winners will be announced at the Australia Day celebrations.

Let's make sure those celebrations reflect the heart of our community — not just its achievements, but its spirit.

Because in the end, the soul of your community isn't found in its infrastructure or its institutions. It's found in its people. And it's time we celebrated them.

Vanessa

Vanessa Mace
Editor in Chief

BLUE Mountains*life*

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DARLENE ANNALEAH

Account Manager

With a background in print, Darlene has been successful in helping businesses grow and promote their products for many years. She is passionate about understanding how your business works and how best to target the wide audience the region's No.1 magazine has to offer.

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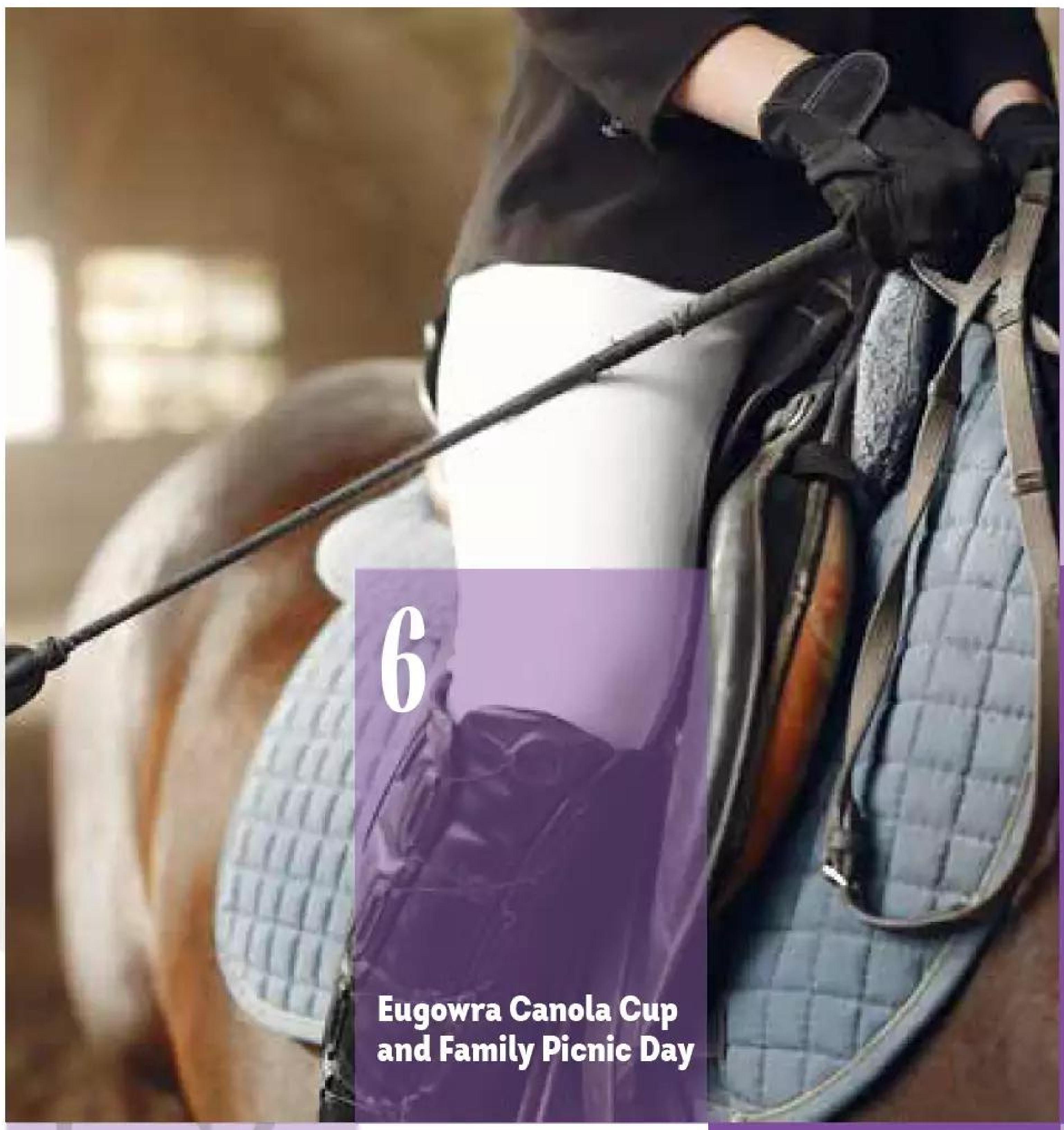
WHAT'S ON

October

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3 Leura Gardens Festival Oct 3-6	4 Everglades Spring Fest Oct 4-6
	6 Eugowra Canola Cup and Family Picnic Day		8	9 Repco Bathurst 1000 Oct 9-12	10	11 Blayney Twilight Shopping
12	13	14	15	16 Orange Wine Festival Oct 17-Nov2		
19 Newbridge Art Show Miss Traill's Markets			22 Adventure Reels Film Tour Katoomba	23 Australian National Field Days Oct 23-25	24	25 Open Garden at Brangayne Carcoar Show Bathurst Spring Spectacular
26 Historic St Matthew's Anglican Church Tour Hartley Valley Garden Festival Oct 25-26			29	30	31	

November

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30 						1 **Orange Wine Festival continued Nov 1 & 2**
		4				8 **Hawkesbury Classic Paddle**
9	10	11				15
16 **Bathurst Swap Meet, Car and Bike Show** **Bathurst Outdoor Expo & Christmas Markets**			19	20	21	22
			26	27	28 **Blayney Twilight Shopping**	29

NEWS

A REGIONAL ROUND-UP OF HEADLINE MAKERS

BLUE MOUNTAINS

HONOURING LIFELONG DEDICATION

In a heartfelt tribute to community spirit and enduring dedication, the Blue Mountains City Council will host a special celebration this October to honour two of Megalong Valley's most cherished volunteers: Norma Carlon and Christine Bundy.

For decades, these women have been the quiet force behind the Megalong Valley Community Hall, a venue that has served as the beating heart of local life.

Norma Carlon, now 95, has been involved since the 1960s, serving as secretary since the Council took over in the 1970s.

Christine Bundy, born and raised in the Valley, managed hall bookings and operations for over 30 years, all while running the beloved Tea Rooms her mother founded.

Karen Carlon, Norma's daughter-in-law and current Hall committee president, said: "It's more than a building — it's a memory keeper. Norma and Christine have been its guardians."

WESTERN SYDNEY AIRPORT

As the public exhibition period for the Western Sydney International Airport (WSIA) Master Plan 2025–2045 closes, the Blue Mountains City Council has intensified its opposition, citing a continued disregard for community concerns and environmental protections.

Mayor Mark Greenhill has condemned the plan's promotion of a 24/7, curfew-free operation, calling it "an affront to the UNESCO World Heritage status of the Blue Mountains." Despite previous submissions during the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) phase, the Council asserts that none of its core objections have been addressed.

"This master plan proudly touts its round-the-clock operations," said Cr Greenhill. "It's a direct dismissal of the voices of our residents and the environmental sanctity of this region."

NEW CENTRE

Regatta Park Functions, a purpose-built undercover outdoor venue at the Nepean River, has launched.

The function centre has the backing of the team behind 2773 Glenbrook, Laughin' Boy, Conservation Hut Café, and Brightside Bowls.

With room for up to 110 guests, open green lawns, and uninterrupted views of the Nepean River, the site is the perfect setting for weddings, birthdays, corporate events, and community celebrations.

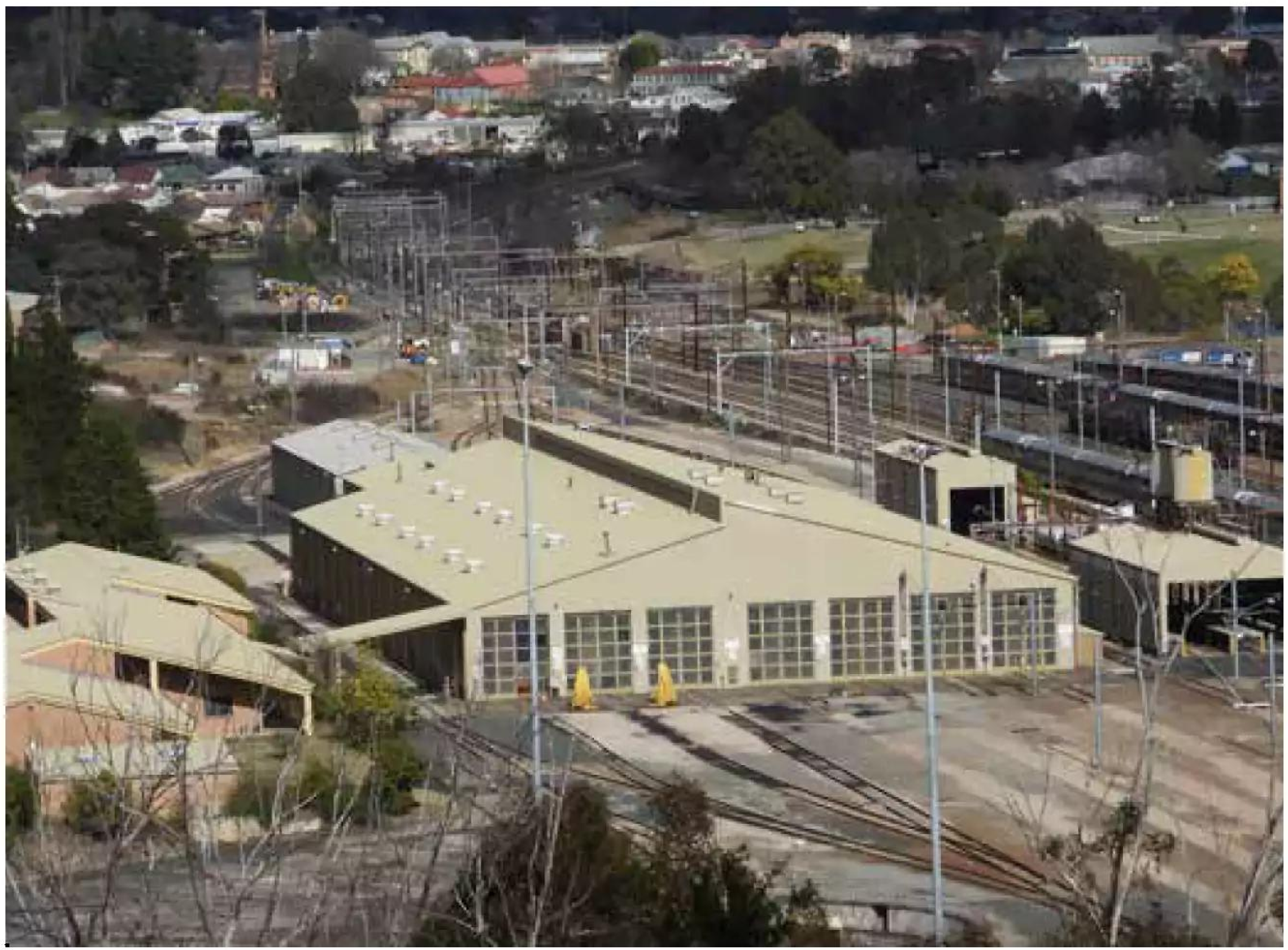
The flexible space works can cater for both stand-up canapé and cocktail-style gatherings, or more traditional seated functions.

The function centre offers nearby parking and an experienced local team on hand to cater for events.

Located near the function centre is also the Regatta Park Kitchen, a new café offering seven-days-a-week breakfast, brunch, and lunch.

The kitchen offers undercover seating, a nearby kids' play area, dog-friendly zones, and leafy green lawns.

LITHGOW



RAIL YARD

In a decisive appeal to both State and Federal Governments, Lithgow Mayor Cassandra Coleman has called for the urgent acquisition of the Pacific National Rail Yard Site, a move she says is critical to securing the region's economic future as it transitions away from coal.

The rail yard, located at the western terminus of Sydney's electrified rail line and at the junction of the Great Western Highway and Bells Line of Road, is a nationally significant site with untapped potential.

Mayor Coleman argues that government ownership and strategic activation of the site could transform Lithgow into a hub for rail manufacturing and freight logistics, while cushioning the economic blow of the region's shift toward Net Zero.

"This is not just about infrastructure," Coleman said in a statement. "It's about justice for a community that has powered New South Wales for over a century. We need both levels of government to step in—together—and secure this site for the people of NSW and Australia."

Lithgow faces a steep economic cliff, with approximately 1,100 direct jobs in coal mining and coal-fired power generation projected to disappear over the next decade.

The rail yard, Coleman says, could be repurposed to create new employment pathways, retrain workers, and attract investment in clean industry and advanced manufacturing.

BROWNS GAP ROAD

In a major win for regional connectivity, Lithgow City Council has secured $4.48 million in disaster recovery funding to fully restore Browns Gap Road, a vital transport link between Hartley Valley and Lithgow.

The funding, jointly provided by the Australian and NSW Governments under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, will enable the road to be rebuilt as a two-lane thoroughfare, easing congestion and reconnecting communities.

The road has faced partial and full closures since July 2022 due to mine subsidence and unstable slopes, severely impacting local travel and access. The reconstruction is expected to be completed by late 2026.

Mayor Cassandra Coleman welcomed the funding, calling Browns Gap Road a "top priority" for the council. "By working with all three levels of government, we've taken a step in the right direction toward restoring Browns Gap to its key community connection purpose," she said.

Federal Minister for Emergency Management Kristy McBain emphasized the importance of supporting disaster-affected communities. "The Albanese Government is committed to helping regions recover and prepare for future events. Projects like this remind us that we're all in this together," she said.

HAWKESBURY

ROAD FLOODED
ROAD SUBJECT TO FLOODING INDICATORS SHOW DEPTH

SMART FLOOD WARNING SIGNS

In a proactive move to enhance public safety during extreme weather, Hawkesbury City Council has unveiled a new fleet of solar-powered digital road signs designed to warn motorists of flood-prone areas in real time.

The initiative, known as the Flooded Roads Smart Warning System, is a collaborative effort between Rotary Foundation Australia, Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation, and the Council.

These intelligent signs have been strategically installed on four of the region's most flood-vulnerable roads: Brennans Dam Road in Vineyard, Tennyson Road in Tennyson, Old East Kurrajong Road in East Kurrajong, and Roberts Creek Road in Blaxlands Ridge.

Unlike the older manual fold-down signs, the new system uses water-level sensors to automatically activate illuminated warnings when flooding occurs.

PLACE OF LEARNING

The Hawkesbury community gathered in vibrant celebration on Sunday to mark the official opening of Ngarra Ngurang—the Place of Learning — at the Hawkesbury Regional Museum. This new Aboriginal garden, developed in partnership with the Dharug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, Merana Aboriginal Community Association, and Dharug community members, is now open to the public.

Over 150 attendees witnessed a powerful Welcome to Country led by Dharug woman Rhiannon Wright and her daughters, followed by a traditional smoking ceremony conducted by Uncle Chris Tobin. The Dhangurru Nura Dance group brought energy and spirit to the event, while speeches from community leaders highlighted the garden's significance.

"This garden is more than a space. It is a symbol of collaboration," said Hawkesbury City Mayor Les Sheather. "It reflects the strength of connection between people and Country, and the role of learning in bringing us together."

The garden is designed as a living classroom, offering visitors a place for reflection, respect, and cultural education. With Stage 2 already underway, plans include expanding access, launching a school program aligned with the NSW syllabus, and enhancing interpretive materials to deepen cultural understanding.

HISTORIC HEART BEATS ANEW

The cobblestones of Windsor Mall echoed with celebration as the community marked the grand reopening of the Windsor Town Centre — an ambitious revitalisation project that has breathed new life into one of Sydney's oldest towns.

After years of planning and construction, the Windsor Liveability Project officially opened with a festive weekend that drew crowds from across the Hawkesbury region. Live music, roving performers, face painting, and giveaways — including 180 cupcakes and 500 coffees—set the tone for a jubilant return to the town's historic core.

The upgraded town centre now features: Elegant feature paving and pedestrian-friendly pathways, Stylish street furniture and landscaped garden beds, improved safety and accessibility measures and 500 engraved name pavers purchased by community members in 2021. The reopening wasn't just about infrastructure — it was about identity. Locals and visitors alike were invited to rediscover Windsor's charm, now framed by thoughtful design and community-driven enhancements.

HAWKESBURY CONT.

BIENNIAL FORMAT

In a strategic move to balance quality and sustainability, Hawkesbury City Council has announced that two of its most beloved community events — Light Up Windsor and Savour the Flavour — will now be held every second year, starting in 2025.

The decision comes in response to the escalating costs of staging large-scale public events. Rather than increasing the events budget or cancelling festivities altogether, Council opted for a biennial schedule, allowing each event to maintain its high standards while easing financial pressure.

Food lovers and festival-goers can mark their calendars for Saturday, 18 October 2025, when Savour the Flavour returns to Richmond Oval. Known for its vibrant celebration of local produce, gourmet delights, and community spirit, the event promises to deliver the same rich experience that residents have come to expect.

BATHURST

BATHURST RURAL CEMETERIES

A pivotal meeting between Bathurst Regional Council and village association representatives is set to shape the future of the region's rural cemeteries, following months of uncertainty and community concern.

In response to legislative changes under the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act, Council was forced to temporarily suspend new burial reservations across six active rural cemeteries. The move, while controversial, was deemed necessary due to the Council's lack of operational infrastructure and financial capacity to meet the stringent compliance requirements now mandated by the NSW Government.

Mayor Cr Robert Taylor acknowledged the emotional toll the suspension has taken on residents, many of whom have deep generational ties to the village cemeteries.

"It was a difficult decision for Council to make," Cr Taylor said. "But one that was a direct result of changes in legislation, requiring Council to become a Cemetery Operator with no previous operational involvement and no resources to meet the extensive management and compliance requirements."

The outcome of the meeting will be released to the public in the coming months.

REVENUE TARGETS

Bathurst Regional Council has proposed updates to the Mount Panorama Revenue Policy following a business review of hireable facilities. The review identified previously free or unavailable items, prompting new pricing to boost revenue and accessibility.

Key additions include hire fees for pit garages, suites, kitchen use, podium access, furniture, signage, and equipment.

ABOUT WETLANDS

WETLANDS PROJECT FLOURISHES

Bathurst Regional Council has unveiled a transformative ecological and educational wetland at the historic Brick Pits site in Kelso, marking a major milestone in local conservation efforts.

Spanning 6.6 hectares on Edgells Lane, the area — once a clay quarry — is now a thriving sanctuary for native wildlife and a dynamic learning space for the community.

The site was acquired by Council in 2017 due to its ecological significance, and thanks to grant funding from the NSW Environmental Trust, Stage 1 of the wetlands project has been successfully completed.

Mayor Robert Taylor praised the collaborative effort, noting that the project overcame significant challenges, including the 2022 Macquarie River Valley floods which delayed earthworks. "Despite the setbacks, we've preserved the integrity of the project and created something truly special," he said.

Already, the wetlands are attracting a diverse array of birdlife and native mammals, offering a haven for both local and migratory species.

Birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts have begun flocking to the site, which features walking tracks and repurposed elements from the Machattie Laneway Shared Streets Spaces project—such as bench seating, sandstone blocks, and transplanted vegetation.

"This is more than an environmental initiative," Mayor Taylor added. "It's a community asset that blends conservation, education, and recreation. Stage 1 is just the beginning."

Stages 2/3, planned for future development, will expand the wetland areas, introduce new trails, and enhance educational features. The broader masterplan aims to deepen the site's biodiversity and public engagement as funding becomes available.

MUSEUMS LEAD THE CHARGE

Visitors to Bathurst's iconic museums will soon find more than just history on display — they'll find cutting-edge electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, thanks to a new partnership between Bathurst Regional Council and EVSE Australia.

In a move that reflects the city's growing commitment to sustainable transport, Council has engaged EVSE Australia to upgrade, manage, and maintain the four EV chargers located at the Bathurst Rail Museum and the National Motor Racing Museum.

The chargers, originally installed to support the development of an EV network in the region, have seen a surge in usage, prompting the need for modernisation.

Mayor Robert Taylor welcomed the upgrade, noting the importance of industry expertise in managing the infrastructure. "It is rewarding to have had such a positive response to the installation of Bathurst's EV chargers and to see usage numbers continue to increase," said Mayor Taylor. "To ensure their seamless management, Council instigated an Expression of Interest process and has subsequently engaged EVSE to replace, own and operate the chargers, in Council's place."

ORANGE

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

As the calendar inches closer to Australia Day 2026, Orange City Council is calling on residents to shine a spotlight on the unsung heroes who make the region thrive.

Nominations are now open for the prestigious Orange Australia Day Awards, which honour individuals, groups, and businesses that have made exceptional contributions to the local community.

Mayor Tony Mileto is urging locals to take a moment and reflect on those who go above and beyond. "We all know someone whose quiet dedication makes a big impact," Cr Mileto said. "Whether it's a tireless volunteer, a youth leader, or a generous business, these awards are our way of saying thank you."

Nomination forms are available online via the Orange City Council website, at the Civic Centre, and the Orange Visitor Information Centre. Submissions close Friday, 5 December 2025, with winners to be announced during the Australia Day celebrations in Cook Park on 26 January 2026.

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SADDLES UP

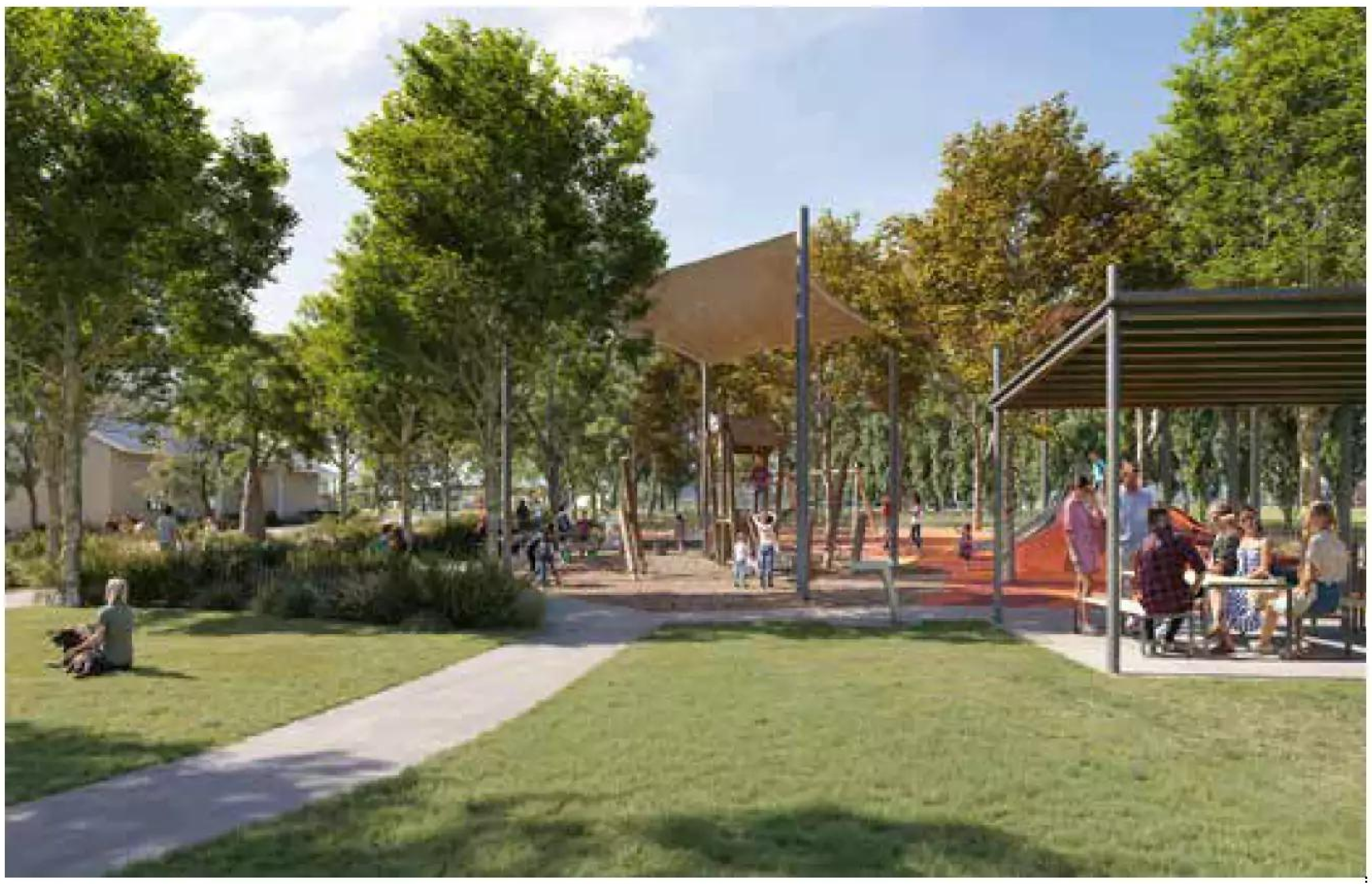
The dust may have settled on the September showdown, but the adrenaline still lingers in the air. Wade Park roared to life last month as the Professional Bull Riders (PBR) Monster Energy Tour thundered into town, marking a historic first for the venue and a thrilling milestone for the city of Orange.

With a near sell-out crowd of 3,700 spectators, the event drew some of Australia's top bull riding talent, transforming the city into a hub of high-octane entertainment.

Mayor Tony Mileto hailed the occasion as a "fantastic opportunity" to showcase Orange on the national stage, likening PBR's prestige to the NRL of bull riding.

Wade Park, typically reserved for football and cricket, underwent a dramatic makeover to accommodate the event.

A custom-built sand arena was installed between the pitch and the western grandstand, with protective measures in place to preserve the turf. Council's greenkeeping team coordinated the transformation to align with the park's annual renovation schedule, ensuring minimal disruption to future sporting fixtures.



REDLEAF

A sweeping transformation is underway in the southeast of Orange, where the newly named Redleaf development is poised to redefine community living and tackle the region's housing challenges head-on.

Jointly spearheaded by Landcom and Orange City Council, Redleaf—formerly known as Redmond Place—draws its name from the city's iconic autumnal foliage.

The project will deliver 330 new homes, with 20 per cent earmarked for affordable housing, on currently vacant council-owned land.

Artist impressions released showcase a vibrant, inclusive neighborhood complete with two new parks shaped by community input.

MCNAMARA PRECINCT

The heart of Orange is beating with renewed energy as the city's ambitious "Future City" initiative moves from blueprint to reality.

This October, residents and visitors alike will witness the transformation of McNamara Street South into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly hub — marking a major milestone in the city's three-year plan to revitalize its central business district.

The McNamara Lane precinct, once a quiet car park, is being reimagined as a dynamic community square. With infrastructure upgrades already underway—including the replacement of a decades-old 150mm water main — Orange City Council is laying the groundwork for a future that blends modern urban design with local character.

The upgrades, scheduled for night-time hours to minimize disruption, will pave the way for a weekend transformation of the area.

Picture this: a car-free zone filled with market stalls, live music, outdoor cinema screenings, and pop-up exhibitions. Councilor Tony Mileto, Chair of the Employment and Economic Development Policy Committee, described it as "an enhanced night-time economy" that will energize local businesses and artists. At a modest cost of $500,000, the McNamara Square project promises an outsized impact. Plans include vintage-style lighting, public art installations, trellises, and lush greenery—all designed to make the CBD more walkable and welcoming.

SUSTAINABLE LIVING

As environmental awareness grows across regional NSW, Orange's Sustainable Living Week offered a timely showcase of practical, planet-friendly solutions.

The week kicked off with the Sustainable Living Expo, now in its 17th year, drawing locals to the Naylor Pavilion for expert advice on energy-efficient homes, rooftop solar, composting, and electric vehicles.

Attendees explored interactive exhibits, rode EVs, and even met native wildlife—proving sustainability can be both educational and engaging.

Supported by Orange City Council and hosted by the Rotary Club of Orange, the event highlighted simple lifestyle changes that reduce waste and cut energy costs.

Workshops and tours throughout the week deepened community engagement, from home electrification tips to native vegetation planting at Waratah Wetlands.

earth care

GARDEN & ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS FROM YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY.

CHIFLEY HOME

The Chifley Home and Education Centre began revitalising its historic gardens in mid-August, following a successful grant from the Copland Foundation. The project aimed to restore the garden to its former glory, reflecting the era when Ben and Elizabeth Chifley lived at the residence.

Known for their love of gardening, the Chifleys cultivated dahlias, colourful annuals, and a thriving vegetable patch. Ben Chifley famously brought cuttings from The Lodge in Canberra to enhance their Bathurst garden.

Bathurst Mayor Robert Taylor praised the initiative, noting its tribute to early 20th-century sustainability. The redesign incorporated drought-tolerant, frost-hardy plants—many propagated by cuttings or division, as was common in the Chifleys' time.

HAZARD CONFERENCE

In a major step toward climate resilience, the Blue Mountains Planetary Health Initiative will host Full Cycle 2025: From Design to Disposal — a landmark three-day conference merging bushfire building and hazardous materials management.

Held in Katoomba from 20–22 November, the event unites experts across construction, emergency response, urban planning, and environmental health.

Mayor Mark Greenhill emphasised the urgency: "We must rethink how we design, build and live to protect human and planetary health."

The conference will feature industry panels, regulatory updates, and a public expo showcasing innovations in disaster risk reduction—from fire-resistant materials to safe asbestos disposal.

CHEERS TO ORANGE

Orange residents gathered this week to celebrate a major environmental achievement, as New South Wales surpassed 14 billion recycled drink containers through the Return and Earn program.

Hosted at the Orange Return and Earn Depot, the community event highlighted the region's contribution to the statewide milestone.

Operated by Wangarang Industries, the depot has processed over 14.6 million bottles, cartons, and cans. "This celebration was our chance to thank the Orange community and to celebrate the social and environmental outcomes," said Wangarang Industries CEO Chris Rawlins.

Photo Ian Baird

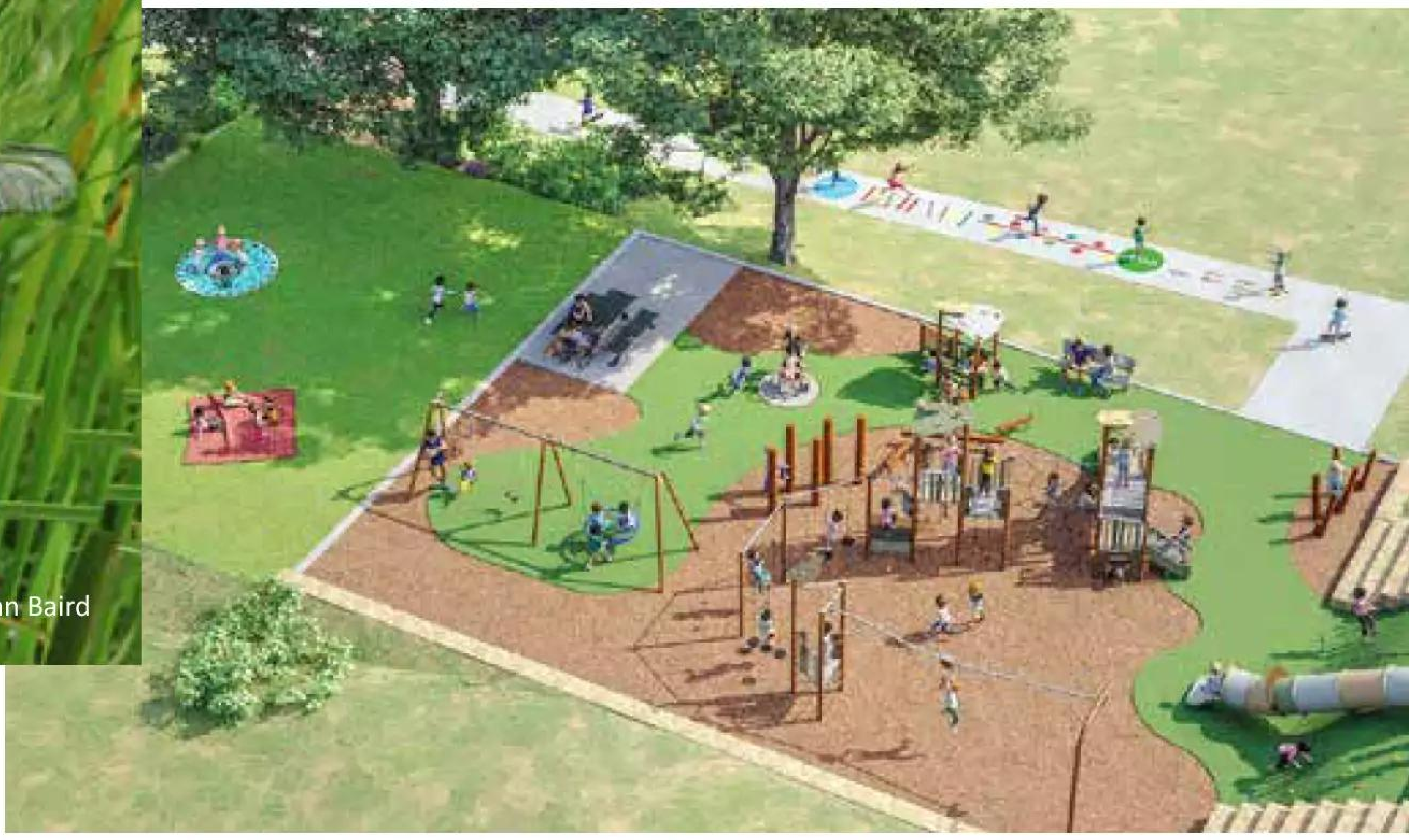
HIDDEN HEROES

They're not the most glamorous landscapes — but Blue Mountains swamps are quietly doing the heavy lifting to keep our creeks flowing, our waterfalls cascading, and our endangered species alive.

This year's Waterways Health Snapshot from Blue Mountains City Council shines a spotlight on these rare, sponge-like ecosystems. Often overlooked, swamps act as natural reservoirs, slowly releasing clean groundwater that sustains the region's iconic waterways year-round.

Despite their ecological importance, swamps are fragile. Urban stormwater runoff—laden with pollutants and weeds—is eroding their ability to hold water. The Council's latest data reveals that 43 per cent of local waterways are in poor to fair health, with three additional sites downgraded to 'poor' this year alone.

In response, Council is expanding its network of stormwater biofilters—also known as raingardens. These cleverly designed systems mimic swamp functions, using plants, sand, and gravel to slow and clean runoff before it reaches sensitive ecosystems.



MOUNT VICTORIA PARK

Mount Victoria Memorial Park is on the brink of a vibrant transformation, with final designs now released for its upgraded playspace and multi-use court.

Backed by $1 million in federal funding, the new design reflects strong community input, incorporating features for all ages and abilities. Blue Mountains Mayor Mark Greenhill praised the collaborative effort:

Construction has begun, with the playspace temporarily closed during works. Notably, the existing swing set near the car park will remain accessible throughout the upgrade.

ABORIGINAL TEACHING GARDEN

Hawkesbury City Council officially opened its new Aboriginal teaching garden, Ngarra Ngurang — Place of Learning — at the Hawkesbury Regional Museum in Windsor. The event marked a significant cultural milestone, celebrating Aboriginal knowledge and connection to Country.

Created in partnership with the Dharug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, Merana Aboriginal Community Association, and Dharug community members, the garden showcased local edible and endemic plants. Attendees were welcomed with a heartfelt Welcome to Country by Dharug woman Rhiannon Wright and her daughter Lyra Walsh.

HAWKESBURY ROAD PATHWAY

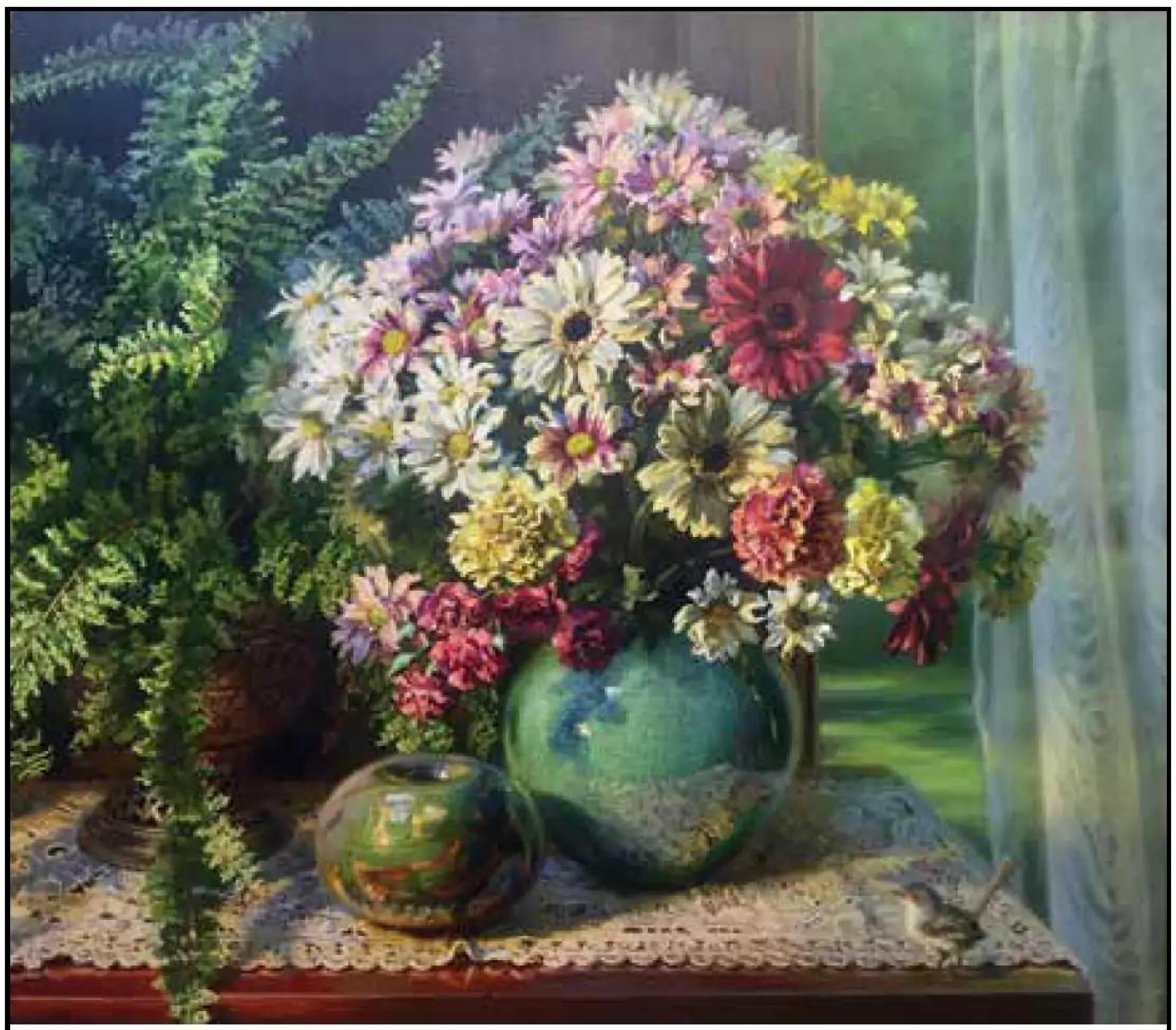
Blue Mountains City Council released detailed designs for a new 4.5km pathway along Hawkesbury Road, marking a major milestone in its Active Transport Links Program.

Scheduled for completion in late 2026, the pathway promised a continuous off-road connection between White Cross Road, Winmalee and Hawkesbury Lookout, Hawkesbury Heights.

The project aimed to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility, linking Springwood and Winmalee town centres with scenic destinations. A community consultation held in January and February 2025 invited feedback on preliminary plans, with strong local support.

art events

EVENTS AND NEWS FROM OUR REGION

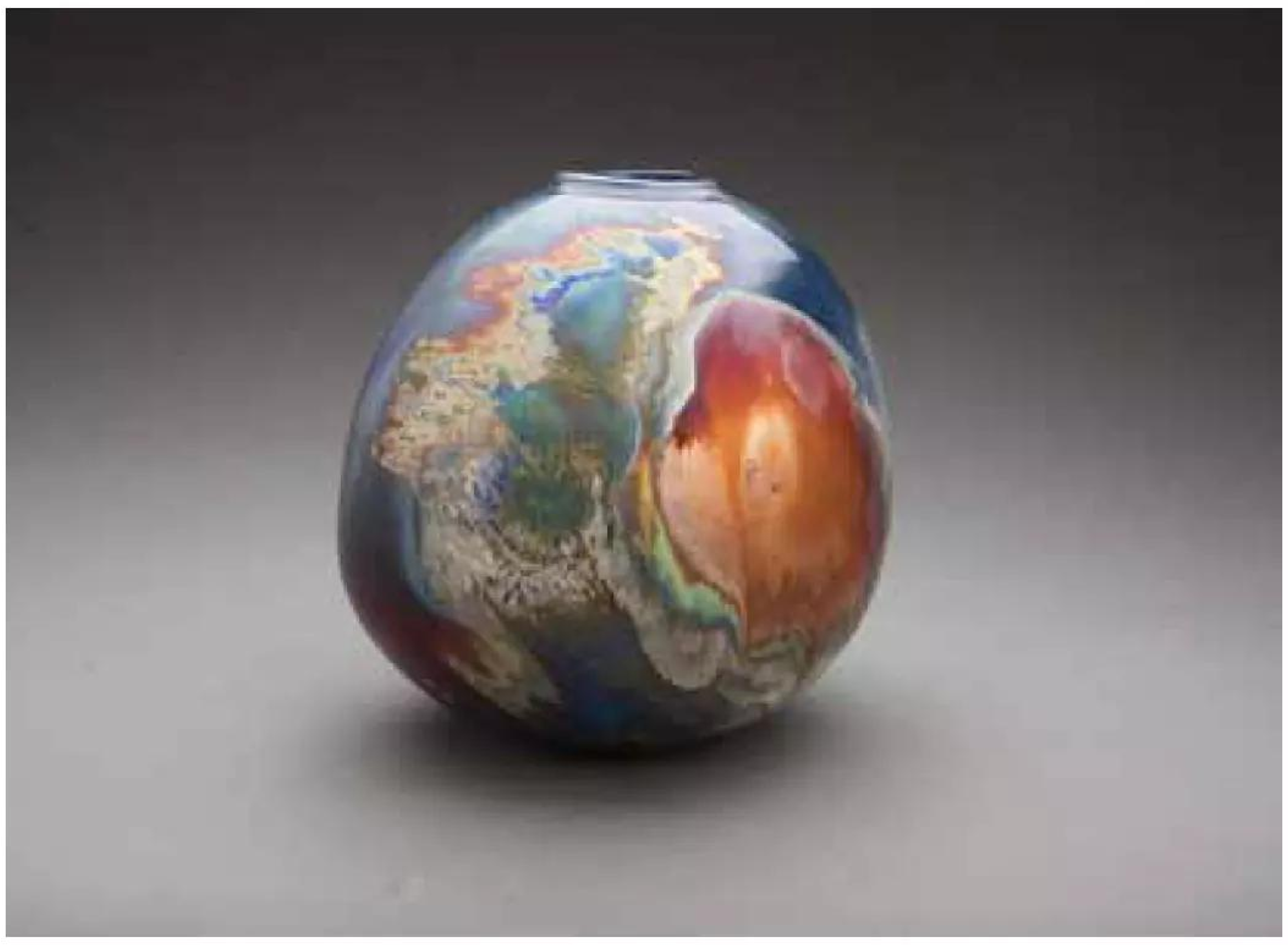


Ann Morton, *The Wren*, 2004, oil on linen

Obsession to Create

Ann Morton and Greg Daly
An exhibition exploring still life, landscape and atmosphere.

10 October to 16 November 2025
Cowra Regional Art Gallery



Greg Daly, *Storm at Sunset*, 2025, lustre glaze earthenware

Cowra Council

cowra regional art gallery

77 Darling Street Cowra NSW 2794
Open Tuesday to Saturday 10am-4pm,
Sunday 10am-2pm, Mondays closed
Wheelchair access. Admission is free.
www.cowraartgallery.com.au

OBSESSION TO CREATE

The Obsession to Create exhibition brings together two Cowra artists Ann Morton and Greg Daly, one a painter the other a ceramicist.

For over 30 years a collaboration has taken place between these two artists of different mediums — Greg making ceramic vessels for Ann to include in her still life paintings.

Both are drawn to the Cowra landscape and atmospheric light, these elements appearing in Ann's works and in the surfaces of Greg's ceramics.

Ann's still life paintings are rich in composition and alive with details from the lace tabletop on which sits Greg's work filled with flora that creates a canvas of complexity.

Her landscapes strive to capture the colour, light and mood of the land and sky.

Greg's work draws upon light and interaction with the atmosphere and environment.

He captures impressions of light through mist, rain, clouds, sunrise, sunset, dust, storms, heat and the moment as the sun goes down — that after glow that changes for just a moment the land and sky.

His ceramic pieces reveal the importance of light itself interacting with the lustre surfaces of the work.

Light and lustre have a synergy that creates colour and movement.

The angle of the light striking the lustre surface will change its colour and intensity as you move around each of his ceramic works.

SCHOOL OF ARTS

The Wentworth Falls School of Arts has reopened following a major upgrade.

The opening coincided with the launch of Aerie, curated by Cassandra Hard Lawrie.

The exhibition featured new works by Fiona Davies, Tom Isaacs, Sean O'Keeffe, Naomi Oliver, Katya Petetskaya, and Alan Schacher (with Sam James).

State Member for Blue Mountains Trish Doyle MP said: "I'm thrilled to see this building in Wentworth Falls have its grand reopening with a fantastic new exhibition and community open day.

"The State Government has proudly funded $650,000 for Blue Mountains City Council to deliver the $692,713 revitalisation of the School of Arts Theatre and Hall.

"The audio-visual upgrade will enable the School of Arts to become the beating heart of an arts-loving, creative community.

"This facility can now host live music concerts, children's shows, comedy, and more local community and school productions.

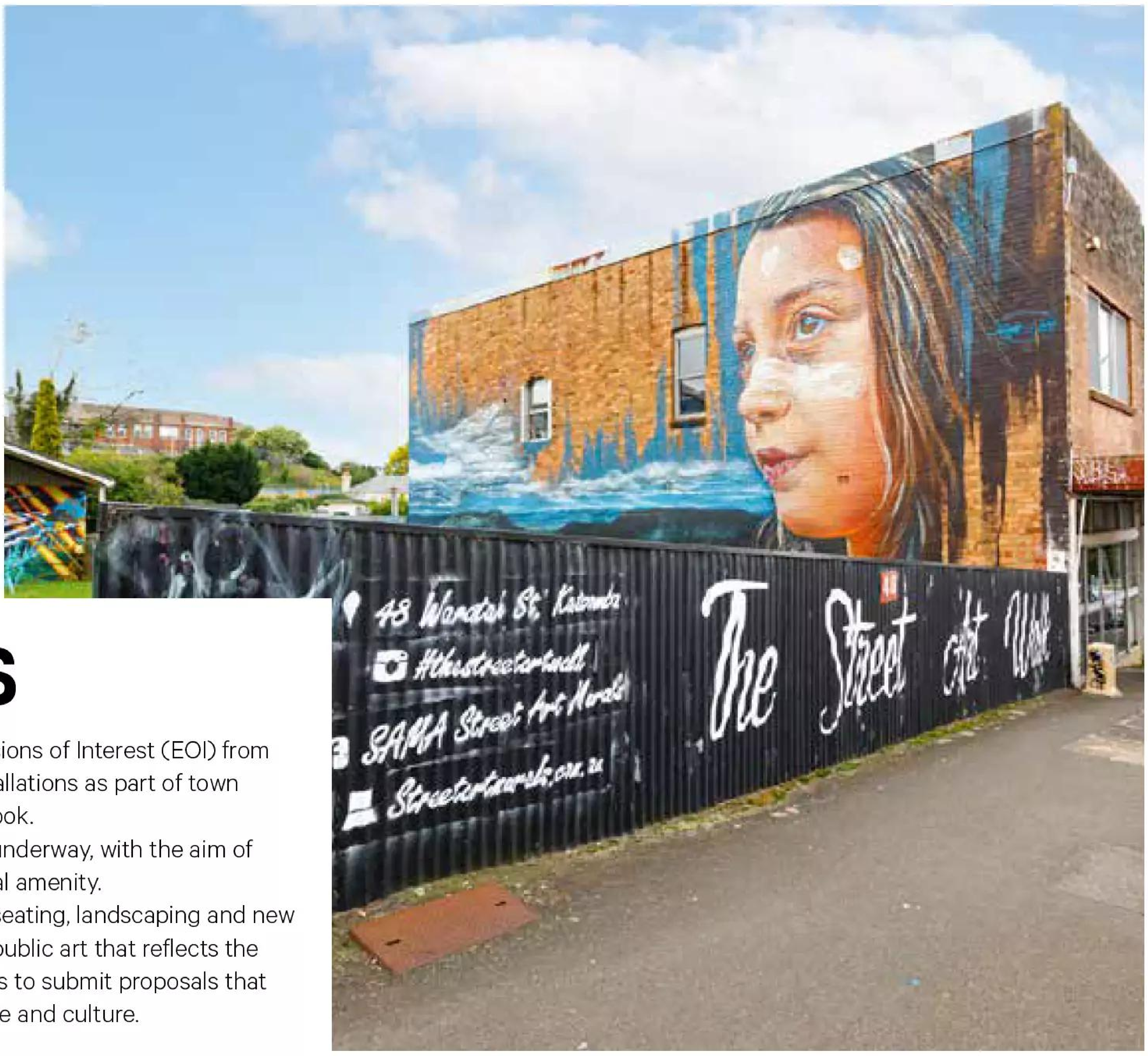
"These projects are part of our commitment to supporting community wellbeing by providing quality public spaces that promote social connection."

SCULPTURES IN THE GARDEN

At least seven local artists will be on show at the Sculptures in the Garden event in October.

Australia's most celebrated regional outdoor sculpture exhibition, now in its 15th year, has become a cornerstone of the cultural calendar, bringing together an inspiring mix of established artists and emerging voices.

The 2025 exhibition will present more than 260 works from 130 artists, with one-third exhibiting for the first time at regional Australia's premier outdoor art showcase. Returning favourites will feature alongside newcomers eager to make their mark.



TOWN CENTRES

Blue Mountains City Council has called for Expressions of Interest (EOI) from artists and creative teams to deliver public art installations as part of town centre upgrade programs in Blaxland and Hazelbrook.

Planning for the upgrade programs is currently underway, with the aim of enhancing accessibility, community safety and local amenity.

Works will include improved footpaths, lighting, seating, landscaping and new public spaces, alongside opportunities for vibrant public art that reflects the Blue Mountains identity. Council invited local artists to submit proposals that explore creative connections between place, people and culture.

COUNTRY CHARM

The Hawkesbury region is gearing up for a feast of epic proportions as Savour the Flavour 2025 returns with a bold country twist. Scheduled for Saturday, 18 October, from 4pm to 9pm at Richmond Oval, this year's event promises to be the biggest and most vibrant yet.

With over 50 stalls — the largest in the event's history — locals and visitors will indulge in the finest food, produce, and beverages crafted by Hawkesbury's own farmers and artisans. From gourmet bites to refreshing drinks, the festival celebrates the region's legacy as Sydney's food bowl.

Entertainment with a Country Kick Boot scooting workshops will get the crowd moving before The Voice contestant James Van Cooper and his band The Jimmys take the stage, delivering a high-energy country rock performance.

Roving entertainers like Phat Brass, carnival rides, and live cooking demos will keep the atmosphere buzzing.

ARTS TRUST GRANTS

Blue Mountains City Council revealed the recipients of the 2025 City of the Arts Trust Grants, with seven local artists and their creative projects selected to receive support through the long-running program.

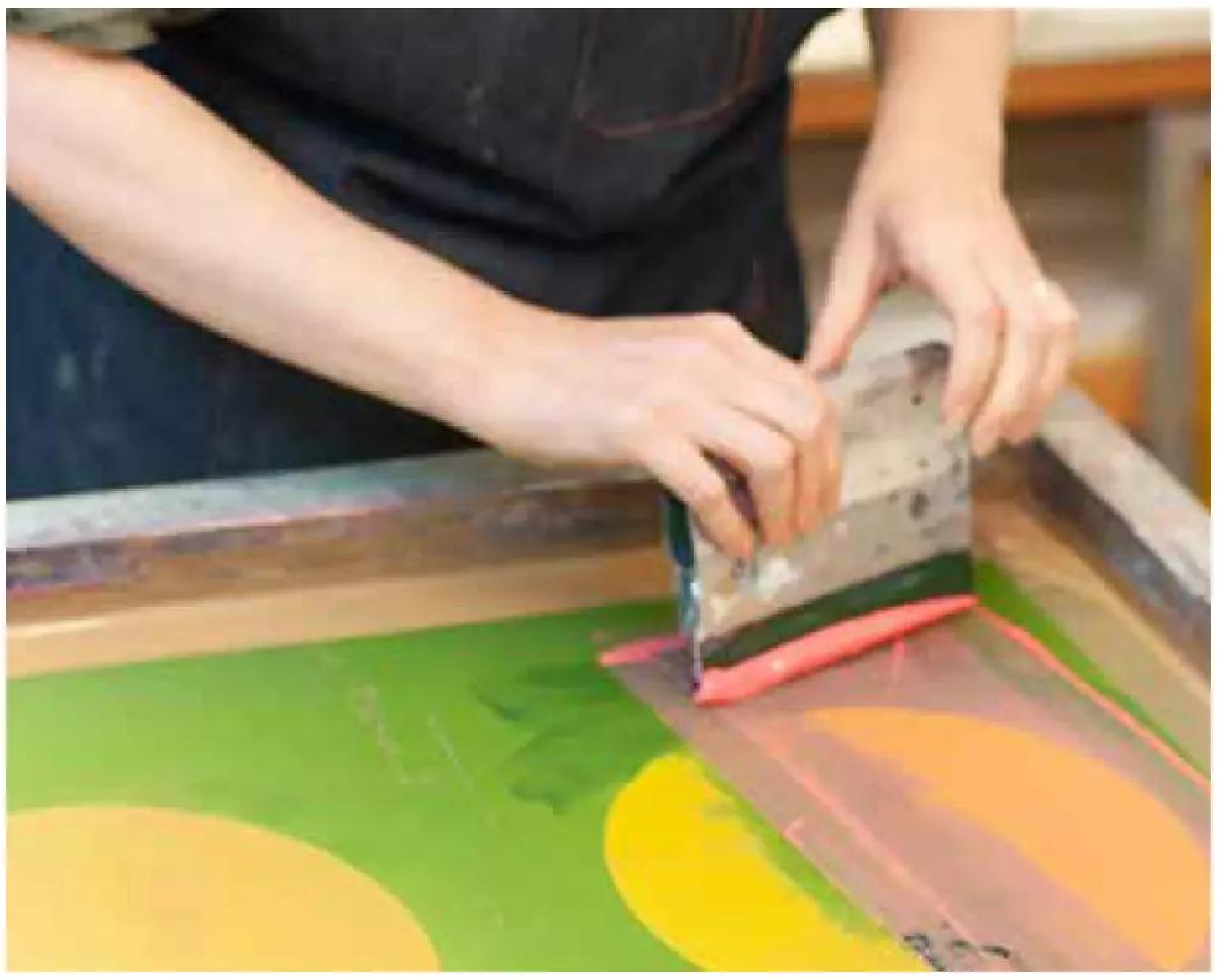
This year's recipients are: David Haines and Joyce Hinterding, Margaret Davis, Jan M Walter, Nick Bryant-Smith. Kalani Gacon, Emma Jardine and Kate Reid. Margaret Davis, recipient of funding for Lookout/Look Out!, said: "Funding from Blue Mountains City of the Arts Trust will allow us to complete this long-term collaboration embracing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stories of settling and unsettling, developed by highly skilled theatre and visual artists from our region.

"The final form of this work as a series of video installations will allow for a wide audience to engage with the central characters and their lived experiences on traditional lands - of those who have always lived here, and those who have come to call this spectacular landscape home."

Kalani Gacon, who will deliver Tell Me a Story, Grandma, said: "This project is a dream come true - connecting seniors in our community, some with no one to share their stories with, with young people of the Blue Mountains. These young people will transform the elders' stories into screenplays and films, preserving the precious stories."

SUZI SAMUEL

Hawkesbury Library played host to author Suzi Samuel as she discussed her latest novel, The Dark at the Threshold. Set between 1468 and the present day in rural France, The Dark at Threshold is a gripping supernatural thriller. Drawing on her 40 years as a medium, Suzi Samuel weaves a chilling tale about a couple whose dream home hides unsettling secrets. A magnificent page-turner combining nail-biting action, romance, fascinating history, gorgeous scenery and incredible food.



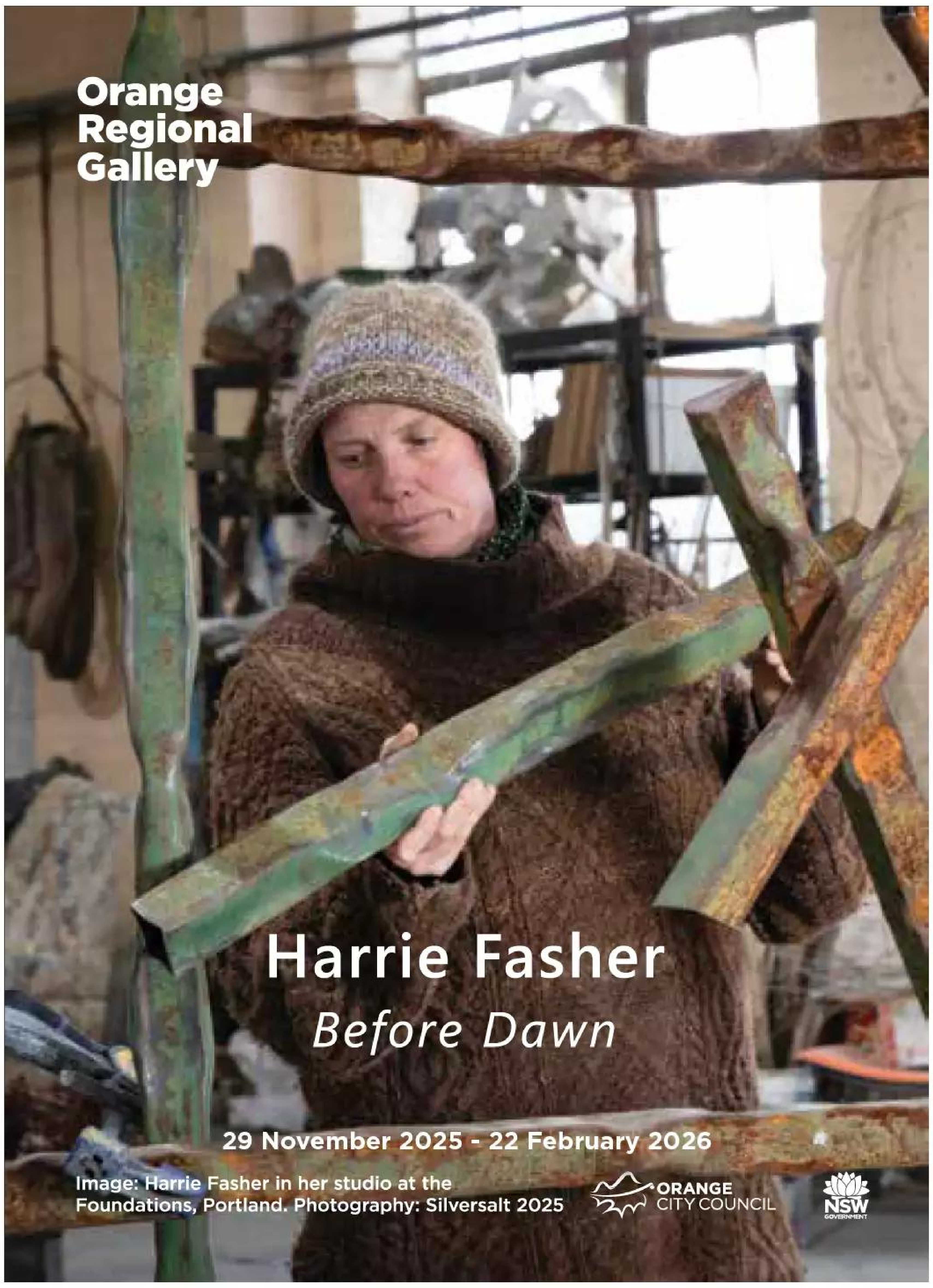
IN PRINT

The Art Matters program, a program aimed at helping school students gain art-making skills, arrived at the Hawkesbury Regional Gallery last month. Developed by the Arts Unit of the NSW Department of Education, Art Matters is a two-day program bringing together students from NSW Government schools with practicing artists. This year, students worked with Blue Mountains artist Freedom Wilson on Stencil Making and Screen Printing.

Harrie Fasher: Before Dawn

Harrie Fasher: Before Dawn is a major solo exhibition featuring monumental bronze and concrete sculptures. This exhibition represents a pivotal moment in Fasher's career, consolidating a decade of artistic and technical research at an ambitious scale. Before Dawn explores resilience and transformation through material contrasts - weight against fragility, rawness against refinement. Harrie Fasher is represented by King Street Gallery on William, Sydney.

Exhibition dates: 29 November – 22 February 2026
Exhibition opening: 6pm, Friday 28 November 2025


Orange Regional Gallery
Harrie Fasher
Before Dawn
29 November 2025 - 22 February 2026
Image: Harrie Fasher in her studio at the Foundations, Portland. Photography: Silversalt 2025
ORANGE CITY COUNCIL
NSW GOVERNMENT

FOSTER & Co. Botanicals

CRAFTING FLORAL MAGIC FOR YOUR SPECIAL DAY.

WORDS JUDY ARNETT

When it comes to planning a wedding, every detail matters. From the venue to the dress, each element plays a crucial role in creating the perfect day.

One of the most important aspects of any wedding is the flowers. They set the tone, add beauty, and create lasting memories. In Bathurst, Australia, Foster & Co. Botanicals is the go-to destination for couples looking to make their wedding day truly magical.

Foster & Co. Botanicals is not just a flower shop; it's a place where floral dreams come to life. The team, led by the talented Zana, is dedicated to creating stunning floral arrangements that reflect the unique style and personality of each couple. With a deep passion for floristry and a keen eye for detail, Zana and her team ensure that every bouquet, centerpiece, and floral installation is a masterpiece.

One of the standout features of Foster & Co. Botanicals is their commitment to sustainability. They source their blooms locally, ensuring that each arrangement is fresh and vibrant.

By supporting local growers, they not only provide the highest quality flowers but also contribute to the community and reduce their environmental footprint. For eco-conscious couples, this dedication to sustainability is a significant reason to choose Foster & Co. Botanicals for their wedding flowers.

Every couple has a unique vision for their wedding day, and Foster & Co. Botanicals excels at bringing those visions to life. Whether you're dreaming of a rustic, bohemian celebration or a classic, elegant affair, their team can create bespoke arrangements that perfectly match your style.

From lush, cascading bouquets to minimalist, modern centerpieces, they have the expertise to design floral creations that will leave you and your guests in awe.

Planning a wedding can be overwhelming, but Foster & Co. Botanicals is there to make the process as smooth as possible. They offer personalized consultations to understand your vision, preferences, and budget.

This attention to detail ensures that every arrangement is tailored to your specific needs. Their friendly and professional team is always available to answer questions, provide advice, and make adjustments as needed, ensuring that your wedding flowers are nothing short of perfect.

Flowers have the power to evoke emotions and create lasting memories. On your wedding day, you want every detail to be perfect, and Foster & Co. Botanicals understands this. Their stunning floral arrangements will not only enhance the beauty of your venue but also create a magical atmosphere that you and your guests will remember for years to come.

Foster & Co. Botanicals is the ideal choice for couples in Bathurst, looking to add a touch of floral magic to their wedding day. With their passion for perfection, commitment to sustainability, and personalized service, they ensure that every wedding is a beautiful and unforgettable experience.

Foster & Co. Botanicals is the ideal choice for couples in the Central West and Blue Mountains region.

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BOTANICALS
"Where the flowers speak about you..."

WEDDINGS
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Salsa SUBURBS & Second Chances

BY ROBYN DOSS

In the foothills of the Blue Mountains, author Alejandra Martinez is reshaping the literary landscape—one tender, defiant character at a time.

Her debut novel, Salsa in the Suburbs, is more than a story of ageing and romance; it's a celebration of resilience, cultural identity, and the unexpected joy of reinvention.

"I wanted to write about finding love and joy again—and how families react when that happens," Alejandra told Blue Mountains Life magazine, her voice equal parts conviction and warmth.

The novel follows Juan, a widowed Uruguayan-Australian father who dares to fall in love again—this time with Frances, an Aboriginal woman whose presence challenges his daughters' assumptions and opens a door to reconciliation on a deeply personal level.

Alejandra's own story is stitched into the novel's fabric. Raised in Sydney's Latin-American migrant community, she recalls the corrugated iron huts of Fairy Meadow Hostel and the weekend asados in Wollongong's outer suburbs.

"We lived with migrants from all over the world. That shaped how I see community, belonging, and storytelling."

"I grew up surrounded by stories—some told, some hidden. I wanted to give voice to the ones we don't usually hear."

Among the cast, Juan stands out—not just for his optimism, but for his rarity in Australian fiction. A working-class, older migrant man who refuses invisibility, he's become a reader favourite.

"He jumps off the page," Alejandra says. "He's not someone we've seen before in our literature. He's joyful, romantic, and still growing."

Writing Juan was a delight, but Lola—his daughter—was a challenge. Alejandra infused her with the realities of living with anxiety, drawing from personal experience.

"There's still stigma around mental illness. Through Lola, I wanted to show how it shapes decisions and limits lives, but also how it can be navigated with compassion."

"I've lived with anxiety most of my life. Writing Lola was cathartic, but also confronting. She's flawed, like all of us."

The novel's themes—ageing, identity, intergenerational trauma—are handled with

Salsa in the Suburbs
Alejandra Martinez

grace and grit.

Alejandra doesn't shy away from complexity. Instead, she leans into it, crafting a narrative that's both culturally authentic and emotionally universal.

"As we age, we still have so much to offer. Juan finds there's a good life ahead—and he can still be a mentor to his grandson."

Alejandra's writing process evolved over time.

She began as a "pantser," writing spontaneously, but eventually embraced structure.

"Sometimes a character would surprise me and take their own journey," she laughs. "I had to learn to listen to them."

Even the intimate scene between Juan and Frances sparked a collaborative workshop at Varuna, the Writers House in Katoomba.

"We read it aloud, line by line. It was terrifying—but also liberating. That scene mattered. It showed that older people still desire, still connect.

"There's a myth that passion fades with age. I wanted to challenge that. Juan and Frances are proof that love can bloom at any stage."

> 'They can bridge generations, cultures, even wounds.'

Alejandra's time at Varuna was transformative. "It gave me the space to believe in my voice. Being surrounded by other writers—sharing fears, drafts, dreams—it was magic."

Now, she's focused on short stories and promoting the novel, which is available through Puncher & Wattmann and local bookshops.

She's not planning a sequel: "then again, you never know"—but the characters she's created have already carved a lasting place in readers' hearts.

"People tell me they see their own families in the book. That's the greatest compliment. It means the story is doing its job."

Alejandra's literary influences are as diverse as her heritage.

"I love Isabel Allende, of course. But I also admire Australian writers like Melissa Lucashenko and Christos Tsiolkas. They write with fire and tenderness."

She's passionate about representation—especially for older migrants and women of colour. "We're often written out of the story. I wanted to write us back in—with dignity, humour, and heart."

"I believe stories can heal. They can bridge generations, cultures, even wounds. That's why I write."

For Alejandra, storytelling is a way to honour the past while imagining new futures. And in Salsa in the Suburbs, she's given us a luminous reminder: it's never too late to begin again.

For details: alejandramartinez.com.au.

Mountains' **Heart**

BLUE MOUNTAINS LIFE IS CELEBRATING THE 2025 VOLUNTEER.

WORDS PETER MCKAY

In the Blue Mountains, where sandstone cliffs meet sweeping valleys, community isn't just a concept—it's a lifeline.

At the 2025 Blue Mountains Volunteer of the Year Awards, held at the historic Carrington Hotel in Katoomba, three remarkable individuals and one dedicated team were honoured not just for their service, but for the quiet revolutions they lead in people's lives.

Their stories, and the organisations that make their work possible, are both an inspiration and an insight to the character of locals.

Take, for example, John Eva and the Cancer Wellness Support group that turns grief into generosity.

After losing both his brother and partner to cancer, John Eva found solace and purpose in the Katoomba Op Shop run by Cancer Wellness Support (CWS).

What began as a personal journey of healing evolved into a powerhouse of fundraising.

CWS provides free and low-cost therapies—like counselling, massage, and art therapy—to people living with cancer and their families across the Blue Mountains, Penrith, and Hawkesbury.

These services are often out of reach for those facing financial hardship, but thanks to John's tireless work, the Op Shop now generates over $2 million annually—an astonishing 93 per cent of CWS's total income.

> 'John's efforts ensure that no one faces cancer alone.'

"John's efforts ensure that no one faces cancer alone," said a CWS spokesperson. "He's not just a volunteer—he's the heartbeat of our mission."

John was named both Senior Volunteer of the Year and the overall Blue Mountains Volunteer of the Year, a testament to how personal loss can be transformed into community strength.

Meanwhile, Joanne Costigan and the Blue Mountains Food Services are cooking up a storm.

As a nurse and mother of three, Joanne Costigan knows the power of care. Through Blue Mountains Food Services' Cook + Connect program, she channels that care into weekly cooking sessions for young people with disabilities.

The program isn't just about food—it's about fostering independence, social connection, and self-worth.

Participants learn safe food handling and prepare meals together, but the real nourishment comes from the environment Jo creates: warm, inclusive, and empowering.

The Blue Mountains Food Services also delivers Meals on Wheels and runs nutrition programs for seniors and vulnerable residents.

Joanne's work is part of a broader mission to ensure that no one in the community goes hungry—or unseen.

"Jo's kitchen is a place of growth," said one parent. "She's helping these young people believe in themselves."

Joanne was named Adult Volunteer of the Year for her unwavering commitment to inclusion and dignity.

Finally, the Selvaggi Food Services Team, through their Gateway Family Services program, are delivering more than hampers.

In a region where many families face impossible choices between paying bills and buying groceries, the Selvaggi Food Services Team steps in with compassion and consistency. This three-person team delivers food hampers to over 200 people across the Blue Mountains as part of Gateway Family Services' Essentials emergency relief program.

Gateway
Y SERVICES
es, Strengthening Commu

The Selvaggi Food Security Team (Volunteer Team)

Gateway
Strengthening Family & Community

But their impact stretches far beyond weekly deliveries. They support the Christmas Hamper Project, Kids Hampers, and fundraising events like garage sales and market days—ensuring the pantry stays stocked year-round.

Gateway Family Services offers crisis support, financial counselling, and family programs, helping people navigate hardship with dignity. The Selvaggi team embodies that mission, showing up with food, empathy, and a quiet determination.

"They're the kind of volunteers who change lives without fanfare," said Gemma Rygate, CEO of The Centre for Volunteering. "Their work is the backbone of community resilience."

Named Volunteer Team of the Year, the Selvaggi team reminds us that generosity is often a group effort.

The effort by these locals and organisations has drawn the attention of the NSW Minister with responsibility for Volunteering, Jodie Harrison.

She said the work by these communities was vital in helping others in need.

"Congratulations to the recipients of the Blue Mountains Volunteer of the Year Awards. You've been recognised as heroes by the people in your communities who know you best," she said.

"Thank you for your ongoing contributions, which make New South Wales the best state to live and work in."

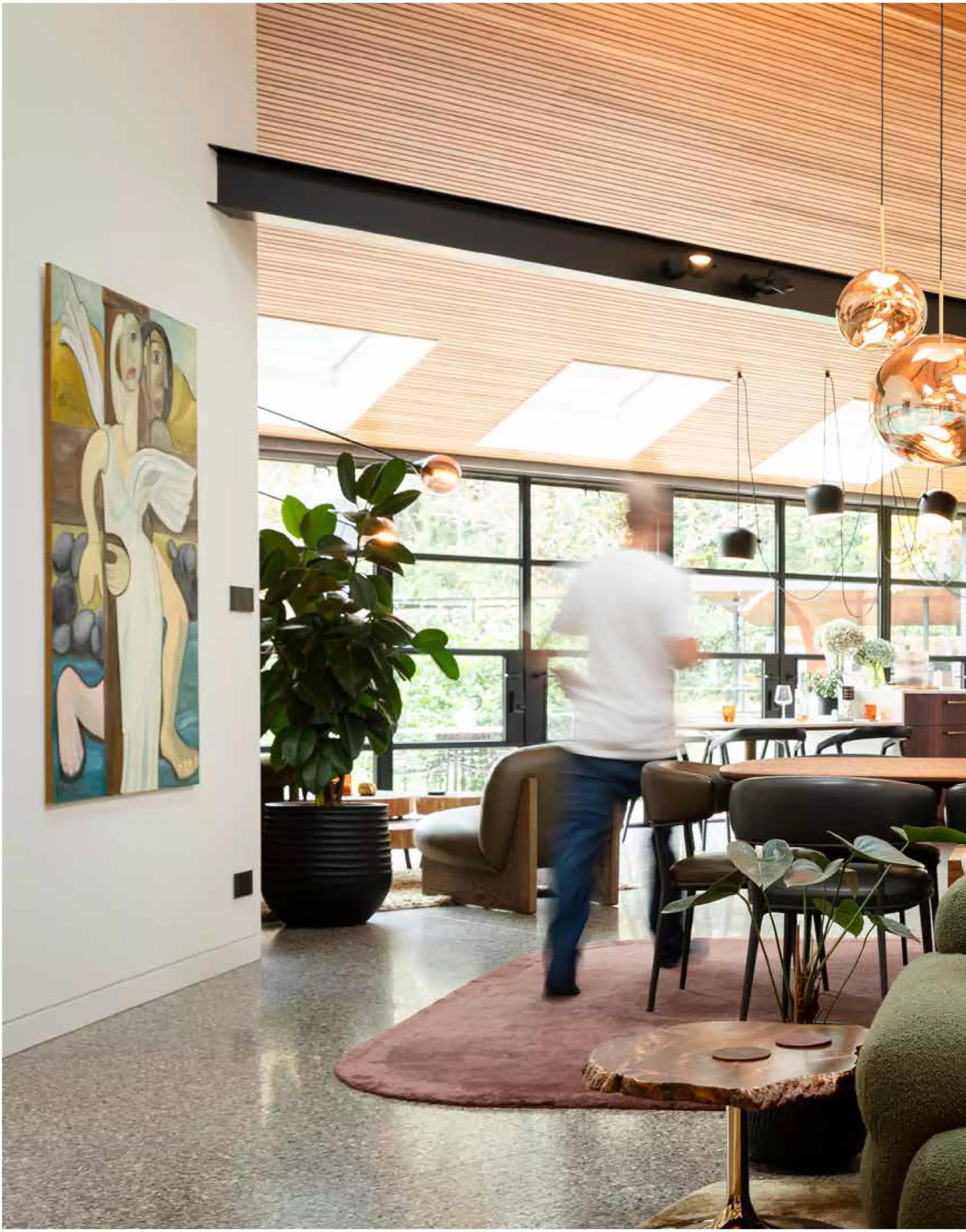
These awards are an important way we recognise your passion and dedication to your local communities.

"The NSW Government is continuing to work with The Centre for Volunteering to build a more diverse and inclusive volunteering sector so that all our volunteers feel respected and acknowledged for their work," she added.

As these winners prepare to represent the Blue Mountains at the Gala State Ceremony later this year, their stories echo a deeper truth: that in times of crisis, it's not institutions but individuals who show up, again and again, to make things better.

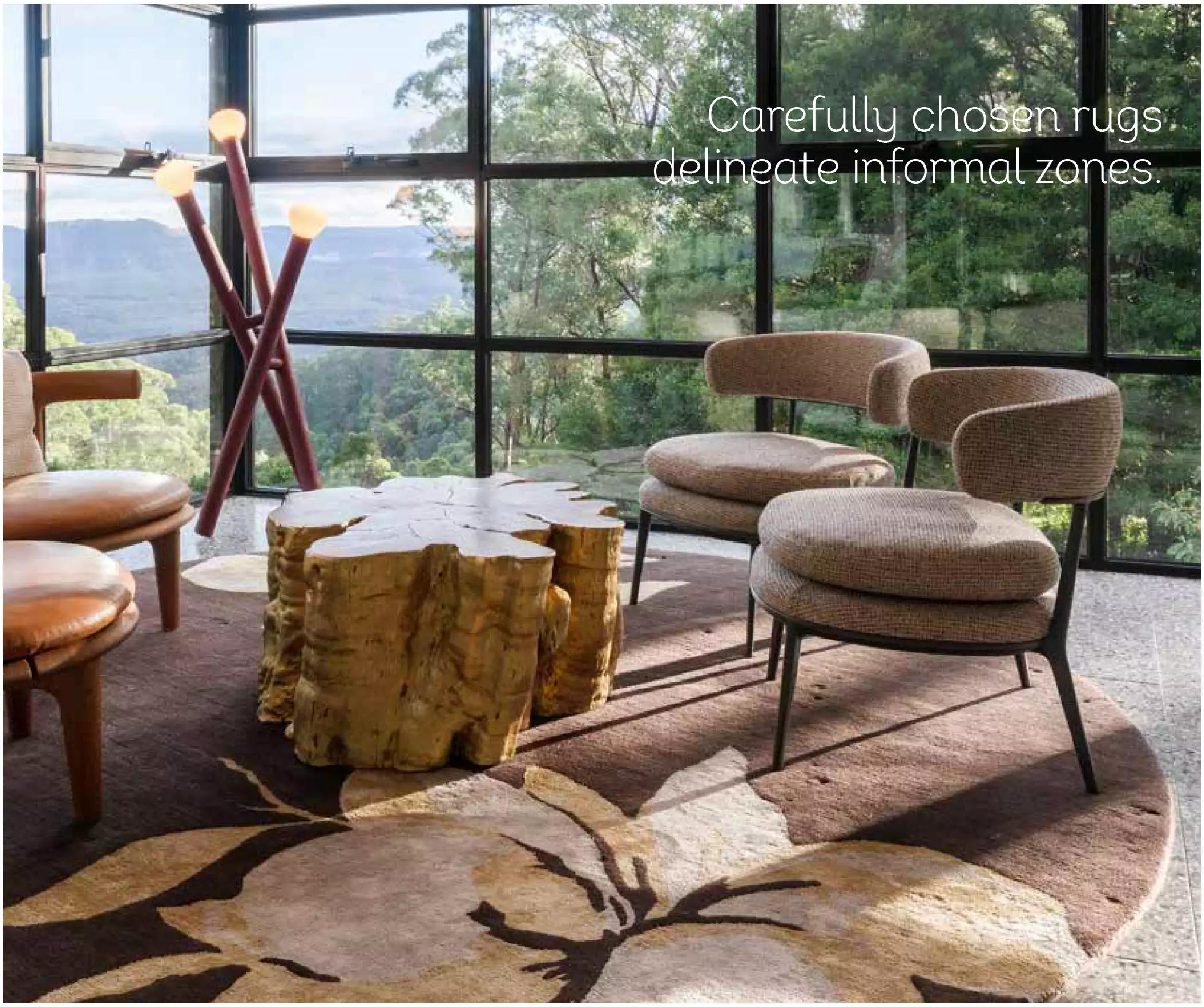
These volunteers—and the organisations they serve—are the soul of the Mountains. Their work doesn't just support the community. It defines it."What we are planning has a symbolic meaning – we are encouraging everyone to share the load by speaking out, so the weight of what you are feeling is easier to carry."

Their story highlights the power of shared efforts to bring about change. BMl



LAYERS of LIGHT & TEXTURE

A MID-CENTURY REVIVAL IN MOUNT TOMAH



Carefully chosen rugs delineate informal zones.

High above the misty valleys of the Blue Mountains, a rendered brick home in Mount Tomah has undergone a breathtaking metamorphosis—one that blends mid-century modern elegance with contemporary warmth.

The visionary behind this transformation? Anne Hogarth, Director of Decoration and Design at Thornton & Blake, whose collaboration with the homeowners has resulted in a space that feels both curated and deeply personal.

The original structure—modest in layout, with tiled floors, timber windows, and gyprock ceilings—offered little hint of the grandeur to come. But the new owners saw potential.

With cathedral ceilings clad in Tasmanian oak and sleek black steel windows, they laid the foundation for a bold reimagining. Hogarth's role was to translate their vision into a layered, livable reality.

The entry foyer sets the tone with Tom Dixon's 'Melt' wall sconces, their organic forms casting fluid shadows that echo the natural surroundings.

These sculptural lights anchor the space and lead into the main living area, where a custom Janua brass basket table—topped with American Walnut in a chainsaw finish—adds rustic texture and artisanal flair.

Underfoot, Fibonacci terrazzo-style tiles in warm greys and blacks are laid over hydronic heating, marrying form and function.

Their subtle pattern bridges the contrast between the timber ceilings and steel-framed windows, while white base tones amplify natural light. Carefully chosen rugs delineate informal zones, creating "rooms within a room" that invite both relaxation and conversation.

Two distinct lounge areas offer varied moods. The formal space is anchored by a Gyrofocus hanging fireplace—handcrafted in France and suspended like a sculpture before sweeping garden views.

The second lounge, adjacent to the kitchen, is wrapped in Macau Cork wallpaper with a copper metallic base, shimmering beneath Georgetti Kendama wall lights. It's a space designed for intimacy and connection.

Expansive windows are dressed in James Dunlop 'Element' s-fold drapes, hung from recessed ceiling tracks. These soft, contemporary curtains frame the landscape while offering privacy and warmth.

Their fluid lines echo the organic shapes found throughout the home, reinforcing the mid-century ethos of harmony between indoors and out.

This Mount Tomah residence is more than a renovation—it's a dialogue between client and designer, between architecture and nature. Thornton & Blake's ability to interpret and elevate the homeowner's vision has resulted in a home that feels timeless yet fresh, luxurious yet grounded.

From the sculptural fireplace to the layered textiles, every detail speaks to a thoughtful design process. It's a home that doesn't just sit in the landscape—it sings with it.

PENRITH *Perfection*

A SKY-HIGH SANCTUARY IN PENRITH.

BY JAMES CORD

Nestled in the heart of Penrith's vibrant urban landscape, the penthouse at 302/4B Retreat Drive redefines luxury living with a bold blend of elegance, innovation, and indulgence.

Perched atop the prestigious AQUA @ ESQ development, this residence is more than just a home—it's a lifestyle statement.

Spanning an impressive 293 square metres on title (approximately), this three-bedroom, four-bathroom penthouse offers a rare fusion of expansive space and meticulous design.

Each bedroom is a private retreat, complete with its own ensuite, ensuring comfort and privacy for residents and guests alike.

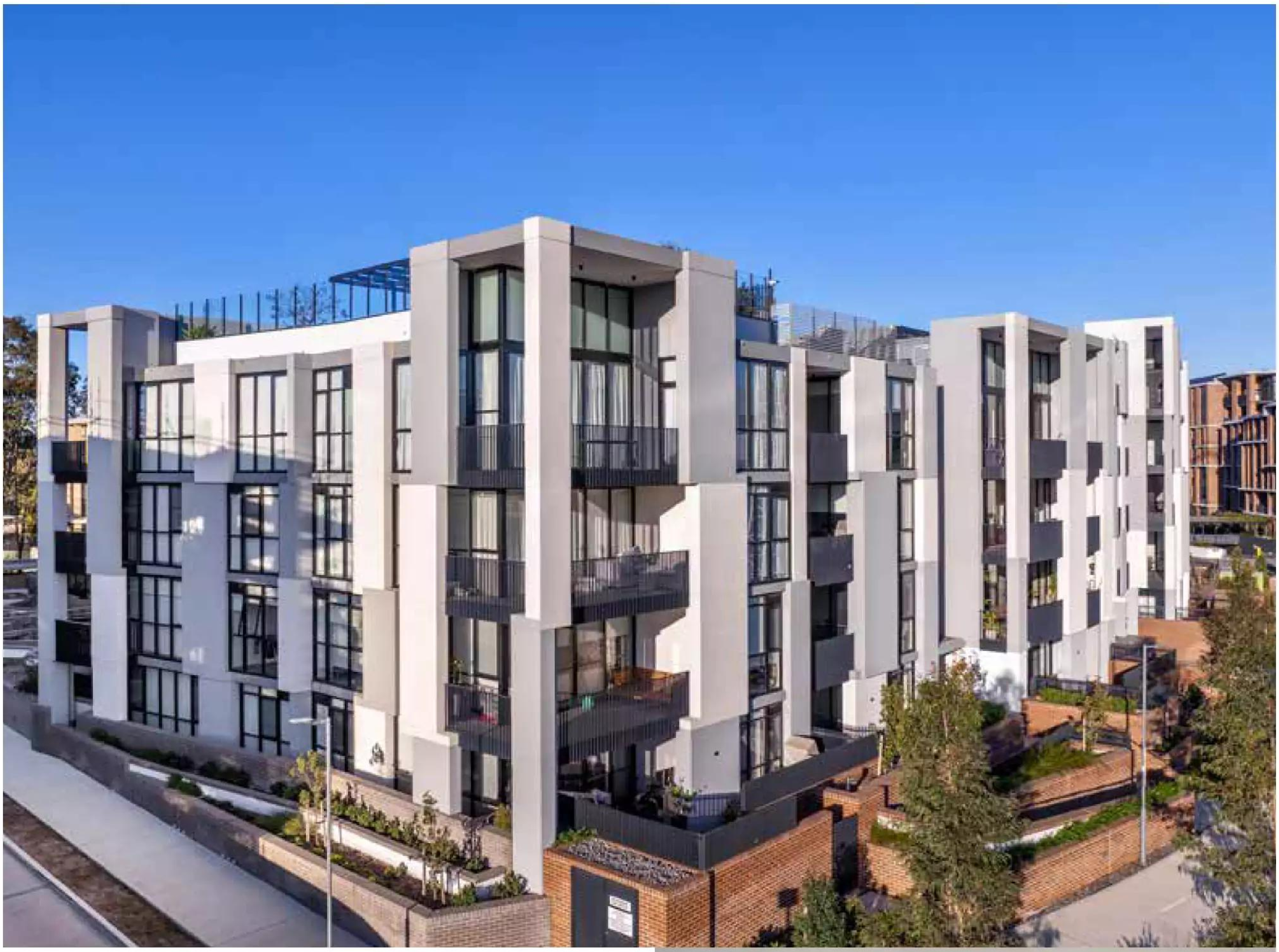
The interiors are a masterclass in sophistication, featuring a harmonious blend of high-quality carpet and exquisite Chinese marble flooring that flows seamlessly throughout the living areas.

The open-plan layout is anchored by a chef's kitchen that would make any culinary enthusiast swoon. Outfitted with double ovens, an integrated coffee machine, fridge, and dishwasher, the kitchen also boasts a Zip tap for instant filtered hot, cold, and sparkling mineral water.

Custom cabinetry and a stylish bar elevate the space, making it perfect for entertaining or unwinding in style.

Step outside and the luxury continues. Three external verandas and rooftop gardens offer panoramic views and multiple zones for relaxation and social gatherings.

Residents can enjoy alfresco dining with outdoor kitchens and BBQs, lounge on daybeds by the pool, or catch the game on the outdoor TV.



It's a resort-style experience without ever leaving home.

Functionality meets finesse with four assigned car spaces and a lockable storage cage conveniently located near the lifts.

Zoned ducted air conditioning and ceiling fans ensure year-round comfort, while thoughtful touches like walk-in robes, study nooks, and secure parking add to the penthouse's appeal.

Location is another jewel in this property's crown. Just metres from Panthers Leagues Club, the Pullman Hotel and Marcel's Restaurant, residents are surrounded by entertainment and fine dining. Penrith Station, Westfield, and East Bank's cafes are all within a short drive, while the upcoming Western Sydney International Airport (opening late 2026) is a mere 26.5 kilometres away (approximately) —ideal for frequent flyers and global professionals.

Despite its grandeur, the penthouse maintains a sense of warmth and livability. It's a place where inspired design meets everyday comfort, where indulgence doesn't compromise practicality.

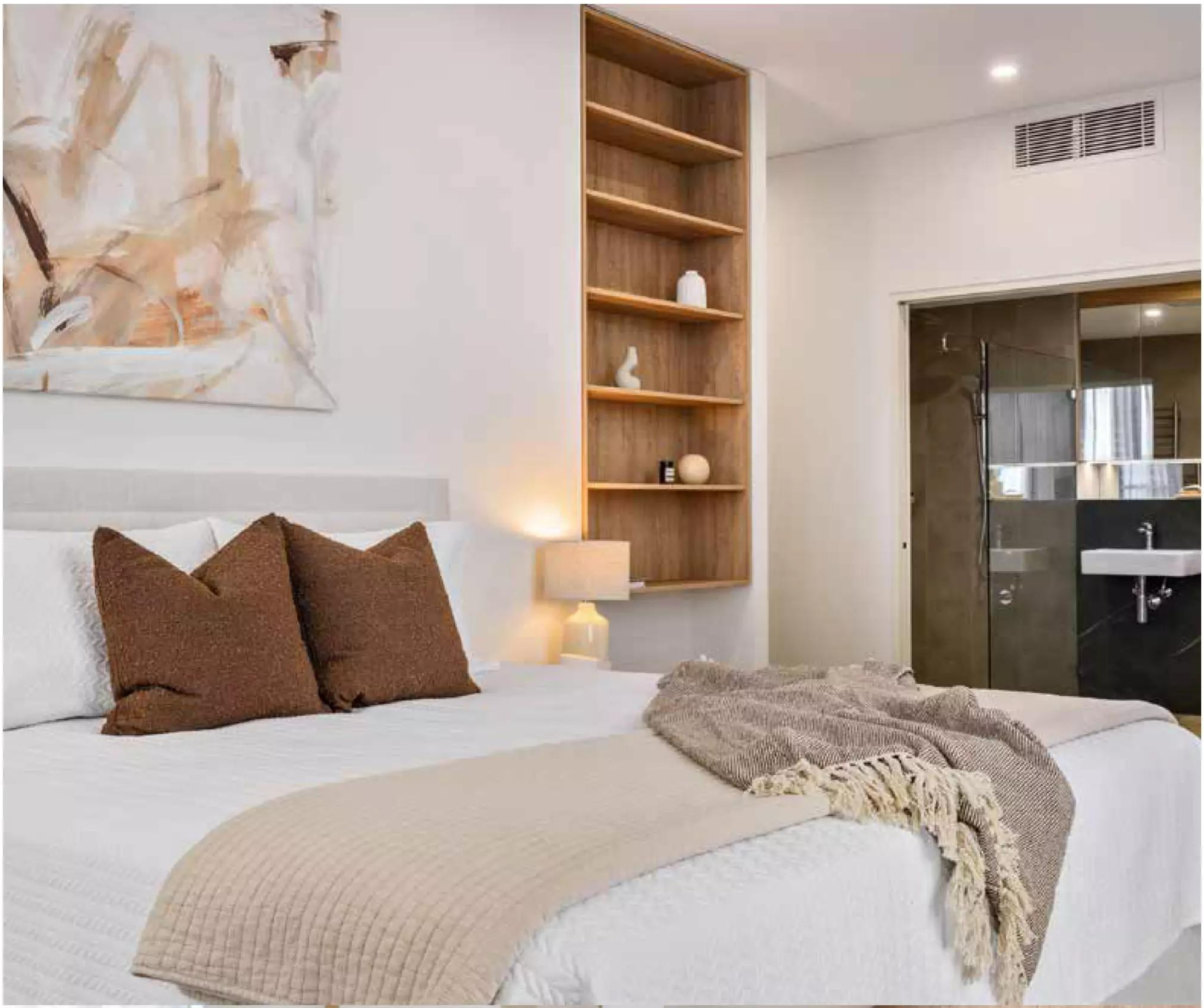
The quarterly council rates of $473, water charges of $175, and strata fees of $3,552 (approximately) reflect the premium nature of the property, but also the comprehensive amenities and services included.

What truly sets this penthouse apart is its vibe: inspired, indulgent, and carefree. It's a sanctuary for those who crave the finer things in life without sacrificing convenience or connection.

Whether you're hosting a sunset soirée on the terrace or enjoying a quiet morning coffee with views of the Blue Mountains, this property offers a lifestyle that's as elevated as its location.

For discerning buyers seeking a luxurious escape in one of Sydney's fastest-growing regions, 302/4B Retreat Drive isn't just a home — it's a destination. BM*l*

For further details, contact the Merrick Property Group on 02 4760 0812.



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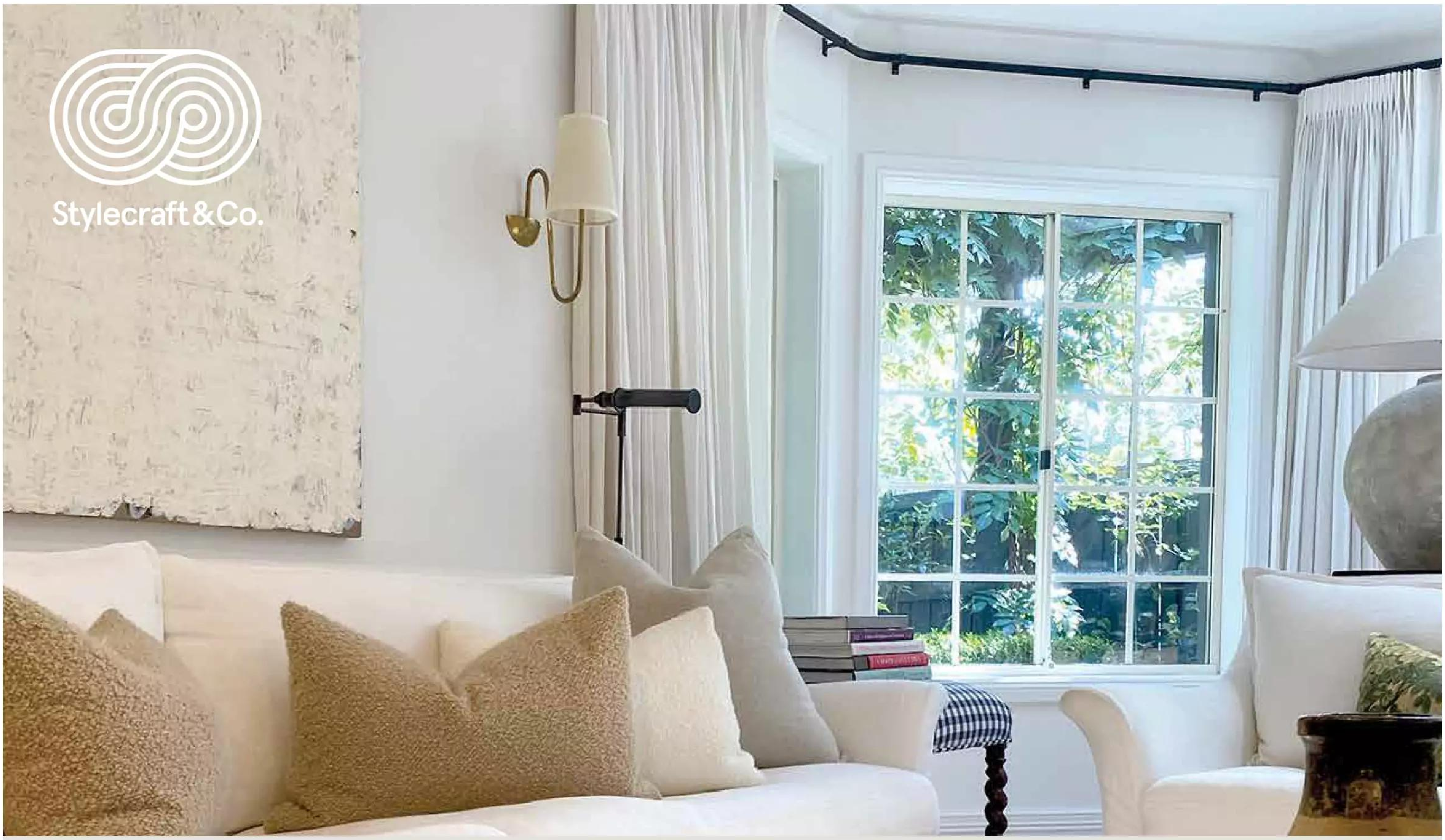

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COUNTRY ELEGANCE

A PRIVATE COUNTRY ESCAPE WITH TIMELESS CHARM.

BY SUE DREW

Nestled behind a grove of mature gums in the heart of Grose Wold, this serene five-bedroom homestead offers a rare blend of rural tranquillity and refined living.

Set on four hectares of gently undulating land, 176 Grose Wold Road is more than a home — it's a lifestyle estate designed for those who value space, privacy, and connection to nature.

From the moment you pass through the electric gates and wind your way up the tree-lined drive, the property reveals its quiet grandeur.

The residence sits well back from the road, framed by park-like grounds and a spring-fed dam that mirrors the sky like a lake. Fruiting macadamia, lemon, pomegranate, and plum trees dot the landscape, adding seasonal colour and a touch of orchard charm.

Inside, the home is thoughtfully laid out for family living and entertaining. The open-plan kitchen, dining, and living area is the heart of the home, anchored by a bay window that captures sweeping views of the dam and gardens.

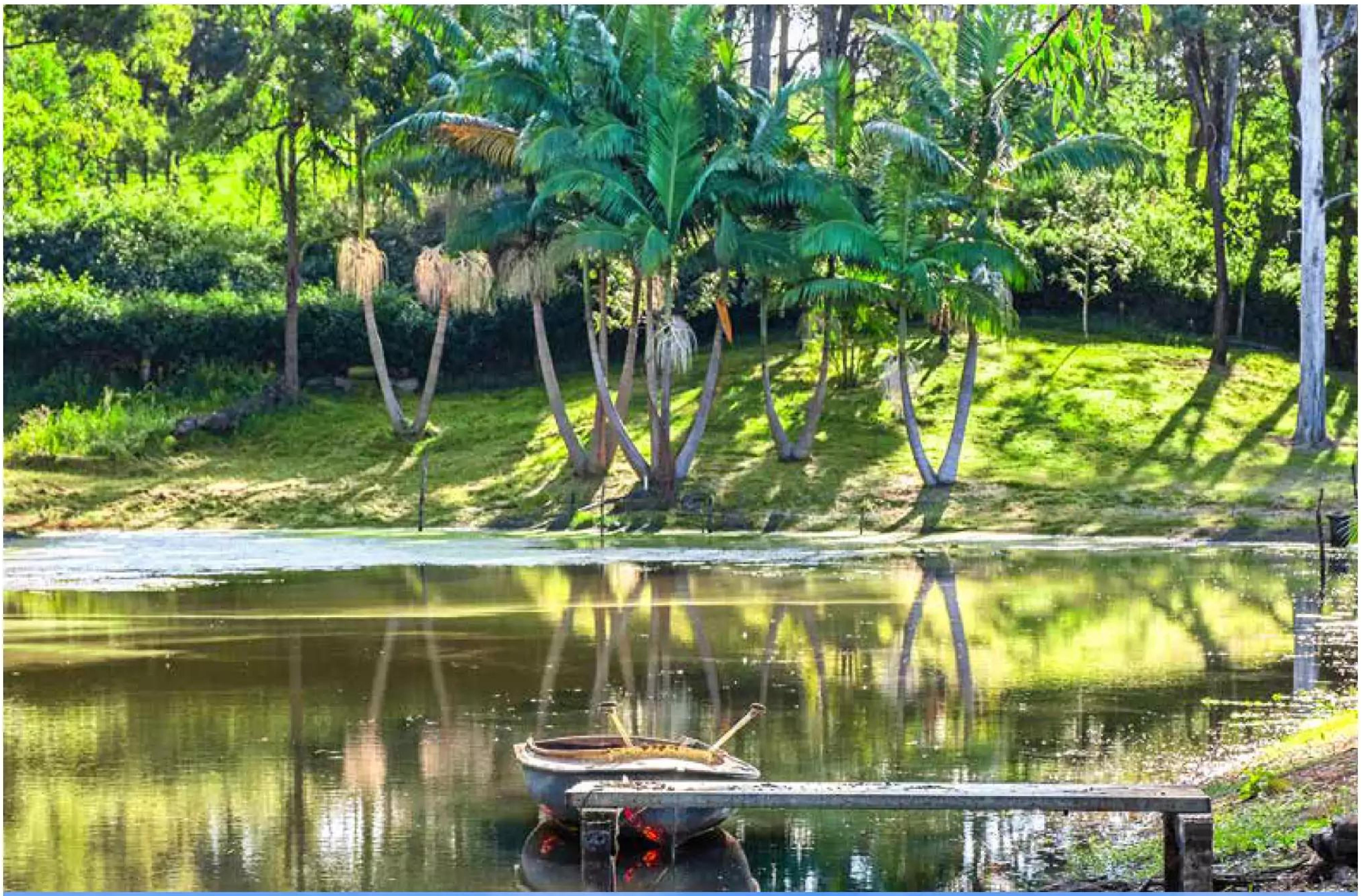
This central space flows effortlessly to a wide, covered alfresco patio — ideal for hosting long lunches, enjoying morning coffee, or simply soaking up the northern light.

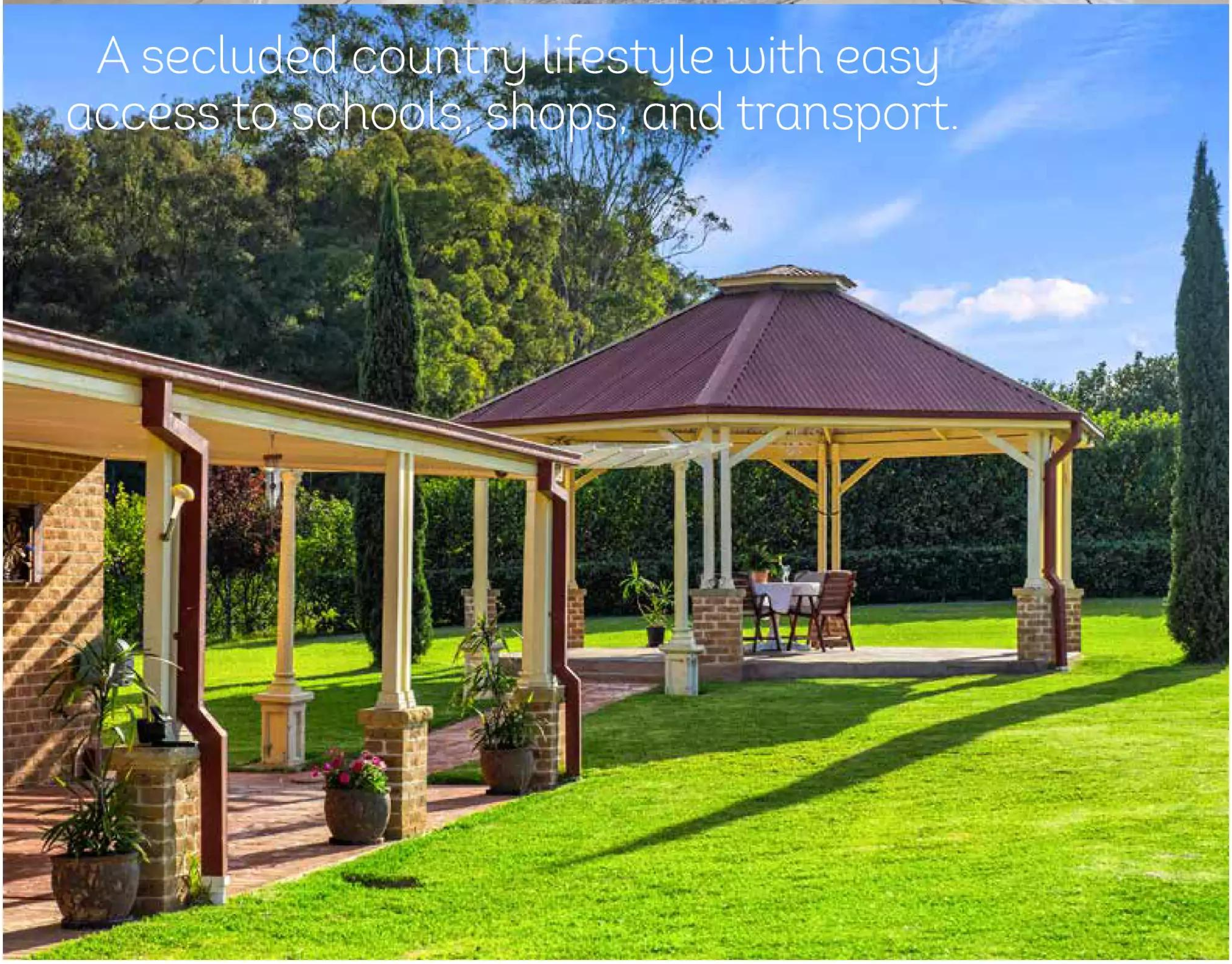
With five bedrooms, two bathrooms, and multiple living zones — including a formal lounge, rumpus room, and a dedicated study, the home offers flexibility for growing families, remote work, or multigenerational living.

The main bedroom is a private retreat, complete with a walk-in robe, ensuite, and electric shutters for added comfort and security.

Modern conveniences are seamlessly integrated throughout. Ducted air conditioning, ceiling fans, high ceilings, and a ducted vacuum system ensure year-round comfort.

Sustainability is also front of mind, with a 15.5kW solar system and a





A secluded country lifestyle with easy access to schools, shops, and transport.

120kL water tank supporting the property's eco-conscious footprint.

Beyond the home, a large shed with office space and a carport adds further versatility—perfect for hobbyists, trades, or those seeking a separate workspace.

The entire estate is fully fenced, offering peace of mind and a safe haven for children and pets. Located just minutes from the charming village of Kurrajong and the amenities of North Richmond, this property offers the best of both worlds: a secluded country lifestyle with easy access to schools, shops, and transport. It's a rare opportunity to secure a slice of Hawkesbury paradise, where every detail has been considered and every corner invites you to slow down and savour the moment.

Whether you're a family seeking space to grow, a couple dreaming of a tree change, or a buyer with an eye for lifestyle and land, 176 Grose Wold Road delivers in spades. It's a home that speaks to the soul — gracious, grounded, and ready to welcome its next chapter. BMl

For more details or to arrange an inspection, contact Cutcliffe Properties on 02 4587 8855.

Country Charm

YOUR NEW LIFE AWAITS IN CULLEN BULLEN.

BY JULIE WRIGHT

In the peaceful village of Cullen Bullen, just a short, convenient drive from the amenities of Lithgow, lies a property that defines the ultimate country lifestyle package. Set on approximately 4.5 acres with three street frontages, 1 Watson Avenue is a beautifully presented double-brick estate offering an enviable blend of space, versatility, and modern comfort.

This is more than just a home; it's an opportunity for self-sufficiency, entertaining, and embracing a slower pace of life, all wrapped up in one stunning package.

The main residence is a picture of classic comfort. Featuring three spacious bedrooms plus a dedicated study (easily convertible to a fourth bedroom), the home boasts beautifully maintained polished floorboards that flow throughout the living spaces. The heart of the home, the kitchen, has been recently updated and offers electric cooking, perfect for the family chef.

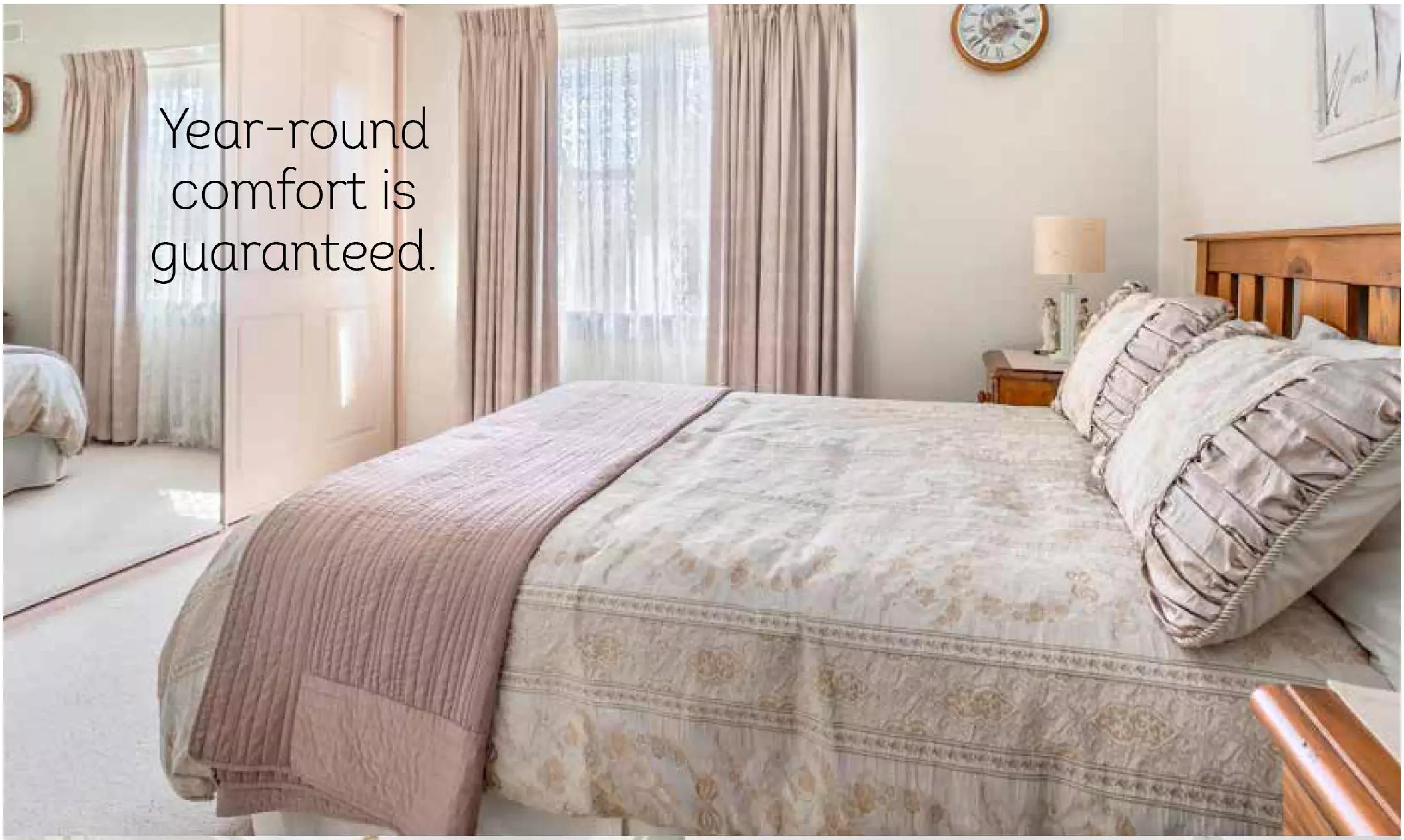
Year-round comfort is guaranteed with a cosy wood burner to ward off the winter chill, complemented by reverse cycle heating and cooling for seamless climate control in any season.

A standout feature is the separate, self-contained granny flat or studio. This flexible space is ideal for housing extended family, accommodating guests, setting up a home office, or even providing potential rental income. Complete with its own gas heating, this additional dwelling ensures privacy and convenience for all.

For those who love to entertain or simply enjoy the great outdoors, 1 Watson Avenue truly shines. Step outside to a huge covered entertaining area, purpose-built for year-round gatherings. Imagine cooking up a storm using the built-in BBQ space or firing up the traditional pizza oven for a weekend feast under the stars.

The property also caters to the growing desire for self-sufficiency. Established vegetable gardens and a dedicated chook run mean fresh, farm-to-table produce and eggs are just steps away. Beyond the immediate gardens, the acreage is well-set up for hobby farmers, with good, fenced paddocks perfect for running a few sheep or horses.

Forget your storage woes. The property boasts impressive

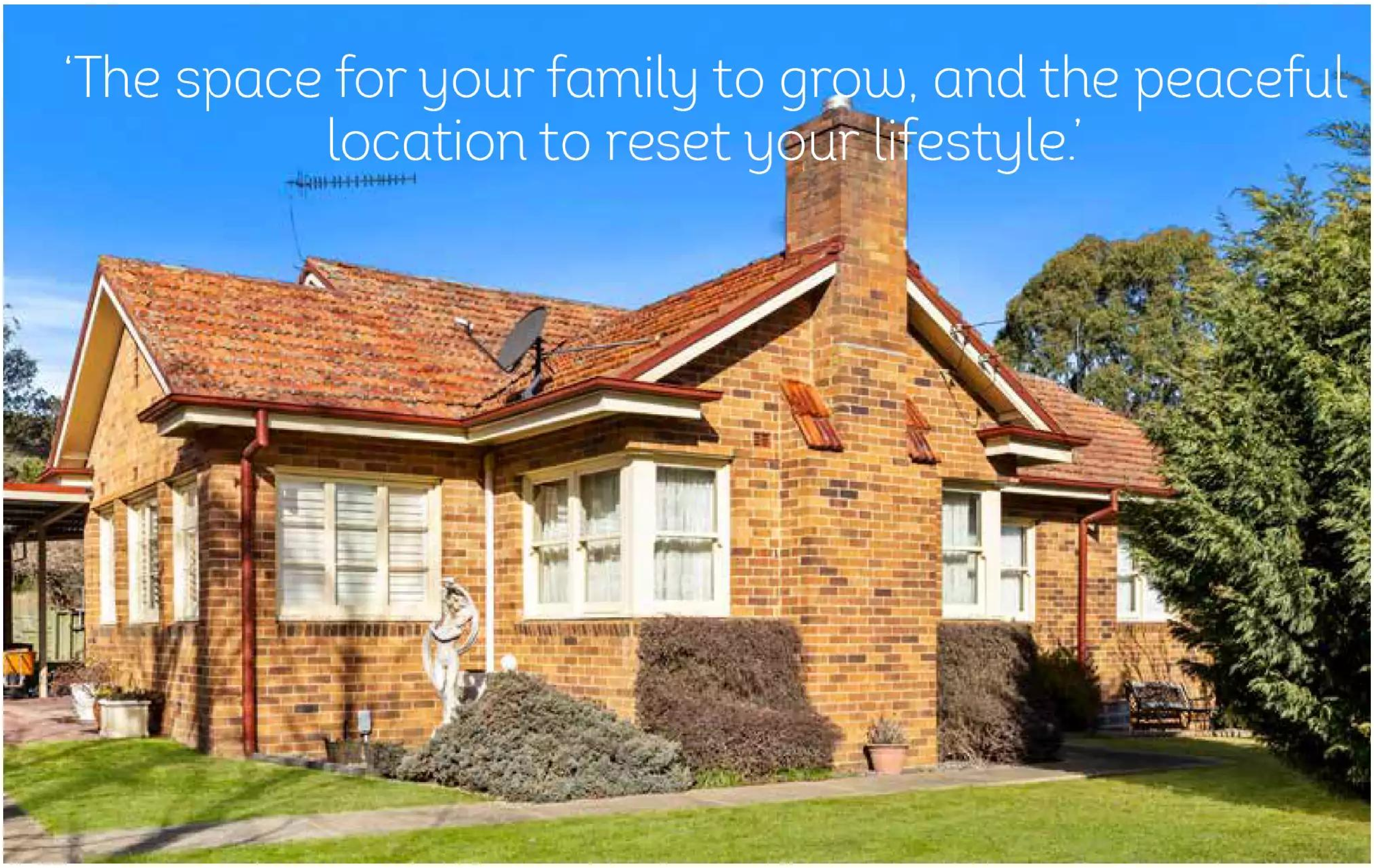


Year-round comfort is guaranteed.

infrastructure, including a massive 3-bay American barn (13.9m x 13.9m). This powerhouse space features a dedicated workshop area and enough room for up to four vehicles, a boat, or a caravan. Environmentally conscious and cost-effective living is further supported by a powerful 6.6kW solar system installed on the barn.

Additional parking is available via a double carport, and the property's utility is secured with not only town water and sewer connection but also two substantial 22,000-litre water tanks. One Watson Avenue, Cullen Bullen, is a property that truly has it all (and future subdivision potential (STCA)) — the space for your family to grow, the infrastructure to support your hobbies, and the peaceful location to reset your lifestyle. Key Features include: a double-brick home with 3 bedrooms and study, an updated kitchen, wood burner and reverse cycle air conditioning, separate, gas-heated granny flat/studio a huge 3-bay American barn with workshop, 6.6kW solar, and 10 total car spaces and town water, town sewer plus two 22,000L water tanks.

For more information or to arrange a private viewing of this exquisite property, please contact HR Realtors & Lifestyle Property Specialists at (02) 6352 2442.


'The space for your family to grow, and the peaceful location to reset your lifestyle.'

Birches of **Leura**

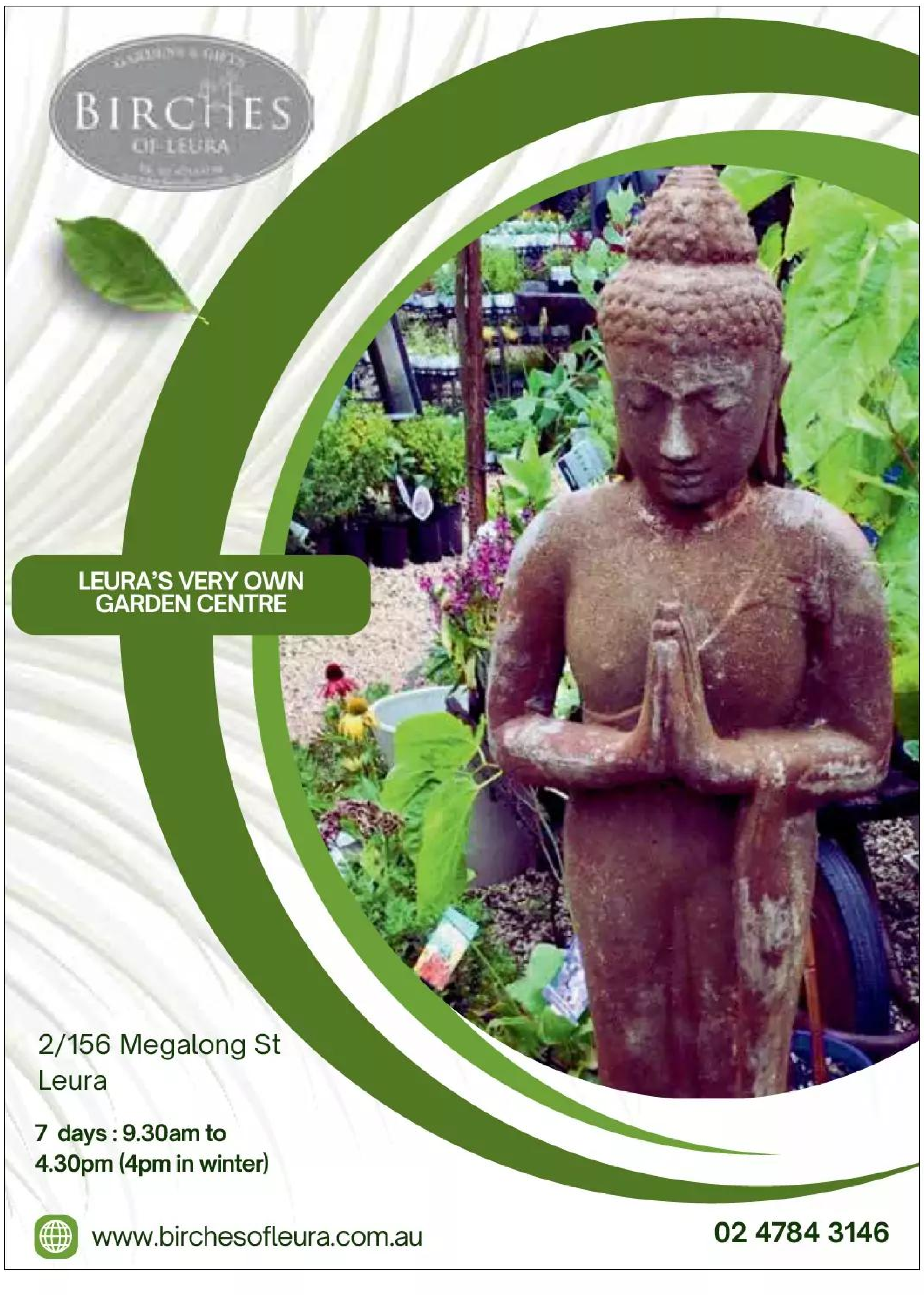
Five years ago, Bruce and Rosemary Hart purchased Birches of Leura, a charming garden oasis tucked into the Megalong Street carpark.

Their venture into small business blossomed with help from son Lachlan, the team's specialist horticulturist, and Joylee, a family friend whose floral talents and creativity shaped their cut flower offerings and unique gift shop.

Sharing space with the Freudian Sip café, they built lasting bonds with owner Des and her staff. Trading under Walytja Pty Limited—"Walytja" being a First Nations word for family—their business radiated community spirit.

Known for quality plants and hard-to-find garden features, the shop's eclectic gifts, pots, metal art, and exotic statuary drew visitors from near and far. As Sproutwell Greenhouse distributors, they offered hands-on support for dedicated gardeners.

They also partnered with eight local primary schools for School Trees Day, planting trees and cultivating environmental awareness. Now celebrating five years, they extend heartfelt thanks to club@birches members, visitors, and loyal suppliers.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MOODY NEUTRALS

THE SOPHISTICATED SHIFT IN INTERIOR STYLING.

BY SUE DUNLOP

In the ever-evolving world of interior design, the Autumn/Winter 2025 season has ushered in a compelling new chapter for neutral palettes.

Gone are the days of sterile whites and washed-out greys—today's neutrals are deeper, richer, and unapologetically emotive. Dubbed "Moody Neutrals," this trend reimagines the understated with a palette that's earthy, warm, and cocooning, offering a sophisticated alternative to both maximalist colour and minimalist starkness. This shift reflects a growing societal desire for comfort and stability in the home. After years of bright, screen-lit saturation, people are seeking refuge in spaces that feel quiet, safe, and intrinsically connected to the natural world. It's an embrace of 'hygge' sensibility, but translated through a more polished, grown-up lens.

At the heart of this aesthetic is a tonal shift: think deep caramel, chestnut, olive, and muted terracotta.

These hues evoke a sense of grounded luxury, drawing inspiration from nature's quieter moments—dried leaves, aged timber, and the soft glow of amber light.

Specifically, key colours like 'Burnt Umber' and 'Fossil Grey' are dominating colour forecasting, serving as elevated base notes that make the more vivid tones of rust and moss feel less jarring and more harmonious.

The result is a palette that feels both timeless and contemporary, ideal for creating interiors that soothe, shelter, and inspire.

Texture plays a starring role in bringing moody neutrals to life. A common mistake with any neutral scheme is failing to incorporate enough material contrast.

Velvet cushions in deep rust or olive green add plushness and depth, while boucle throws and jute rugs introduce tactile contrast. Natural wood finishes—especially in walnut and smoked oak—anchor the look, offering a sense of permanence and warmth.

Layering these elements is key: the more varied the textures, the more dimensional and inviting the space becomes. Consider pairing a coarse linen wall hanging with a finely knitted merino wool blanket, or positioning a smooth, polished marble table next to a heavily grained, reclaimed wood floor.

This deliberate material tension prevents the space from falling flat, giving the eye plenty of sensory information to absorb.

Lighting also contributes to the mood. Amber glass pendants, antique brass fixtures, and smoked glass vases cast a soft, golden glow that enhances the richness of the palette.

These pieces don't just illuminate—they sculpt the atmosphere, turning everyday rooms into intimate retreats.

The goal is to avoid harsh, overhead illumination entirely; instead, designers are favoring multiple sources of low-level light, such as tall floor lamps and strategically placed table lamps, to create pools of warmth and shadow.

Brands like Nkuku and Cox & Cox have embraced this direction, offering lighting and accessories that blend artisanal craftsmanship with tonal elegance.

Cont page 55

> Texture plays a starring role in bringing moody neutrals to life.

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KITCHEN **DESIGN**

THE SEVEN BIGGEST MISTAKES PEOPLE MAKE WHEN DESIGNING A NEW KITCHEN.

A kitchen is one of the most significant investments you will make for your home. As well as being one of the most used spaces, it is important that your new space is not only beautiful, but highly functional and of a quality to last.

With many costly mistakes that can be made with kitchen design, experience is key. Today, we are shining the light on important considerations often overlooked when designing a new kitchen.

An intuitive kitchen design takes into careful consideration sink, stove and fridge placement, whilst ensuring there is ample bench space to offer an efficient and flowing workspace. If these are positioned without careful consideration, use of the space will become cumbersome, awkward and even inefficient.

Modern kitchen designs offer a large range of clever solutions when it comes to storage for your kitchen. Maximising every inch of space with ample pantry space, deep drawers, and smart corner solutions to ensure everything has its place in the most productive space in your home.

A glossy white kitchen may not be the best choice for a home full of small children, with little fingers forever being left behind on your beautiful new kitchen. When choosing materials, colours and appliances for your new kitchen, it is also important to consider your lifestyle, who will be using the kitchen and how frequently you will be using the space.

Relying on ceiling lighting for such a productive space may not be sufficient, especially if your kitchen is located on the South side of the house. Instead, including a lighting plan which covers the work areas sufficiently, as well as some general ambient lighting and feature lighting will ensure you're creating in your kitchen with clarity.

Power points, hidden bins and space for appliances are all important considerations to make when designing your kitchen. It is important to consider these ideas early in the planning phase, to avoid any additional costs during installation, or regrets once you start cooking.

Having an idea of what you are willing to invest in your kitchen up front is important. This could be a range or a set figure. Sharing this figure with your kitchen designer will help them make recommendations of how to prioritise the budget allocation as well as suggest the right materials that will meet your target budget.

Ignoring the resale value of the home, lifestyle changes or impending growing families could wind up being a costly error in judgement. Being mindful to choose a timeless style with flexibility and durability will ensure your kitchen can support you for the long run.

A new kitchen is a big financial investment. Not to mention the impact the installation has on your lifestyle. By considering these frequently made mistakes early in the planning phase, you can save yourself time, money and heartache and ensure you can enjoy cooking in your new kitchen with peace of mind.

T&B

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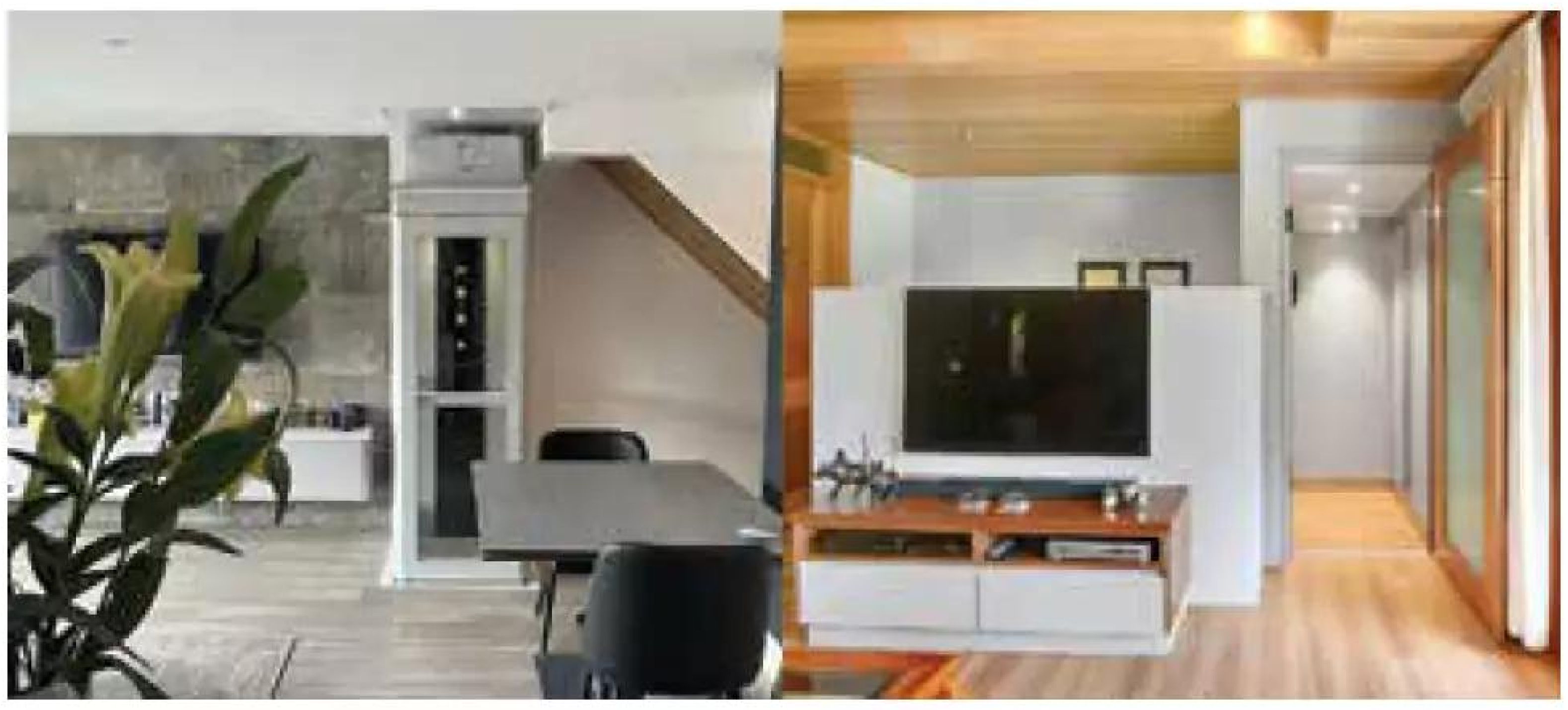

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Velocity Home Lifts stands out for its commitment to innovation, customer satisfaction, and a comprehensive 25-year warranty.

Their core values—continuous improvement, ethical conduct, quality, customer passion, and responsibility—ensure that each product and service is designed to meet the evolving needs of homeowners.

Whether upgrading or building a new home, Velocity Home Lifts delivers functional, stylish, and reliable lift solutions for enhanced mobility and freedom.

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Furniture follows suit, favouring curved silhouettes and tactile finishes. Swivel chairs in espresso faux mohair, cane bed frames in olive tones, and sideboards in dark timber all echo the moody neutral ethos.

These pieces aren't just functional—they're sculptural, adding visual weight and character to interiors without overwhelming them. The focus is on comfort and substantiality, moving away from flimsy, mass-produced items toward investment pieces that feel solid and enduring.

Art and décor provide the finishing touches.

Abstract prints in burnt sienna and moss green, botanical illustrations in sepia tones, and ceramic vessels in dusty terracotta all contribute to the layered, lived-in feel.

The goal is not perfection but personality—spaces that feel curated, not staged.

Moody neutrals also lend themselves beautifully to seasonal styling. As the weather cools, these tones offer a natural transition, echoing the changing landscape outside.

A caramel throw here, a chestnut-toned lamp there—small additions can shift the mood of a room without a complete overhaul.

For a quick update, swap out bright summer artwork for a framed photograph with deep monochrome tones, or replace a colourful fruit bowl with a collection of aged brass and clay vases. It's a palette that rewards subtlety and invites introspection.

For stylists and homeowners alike, the appeal of moody neutrals lies in their versatility.

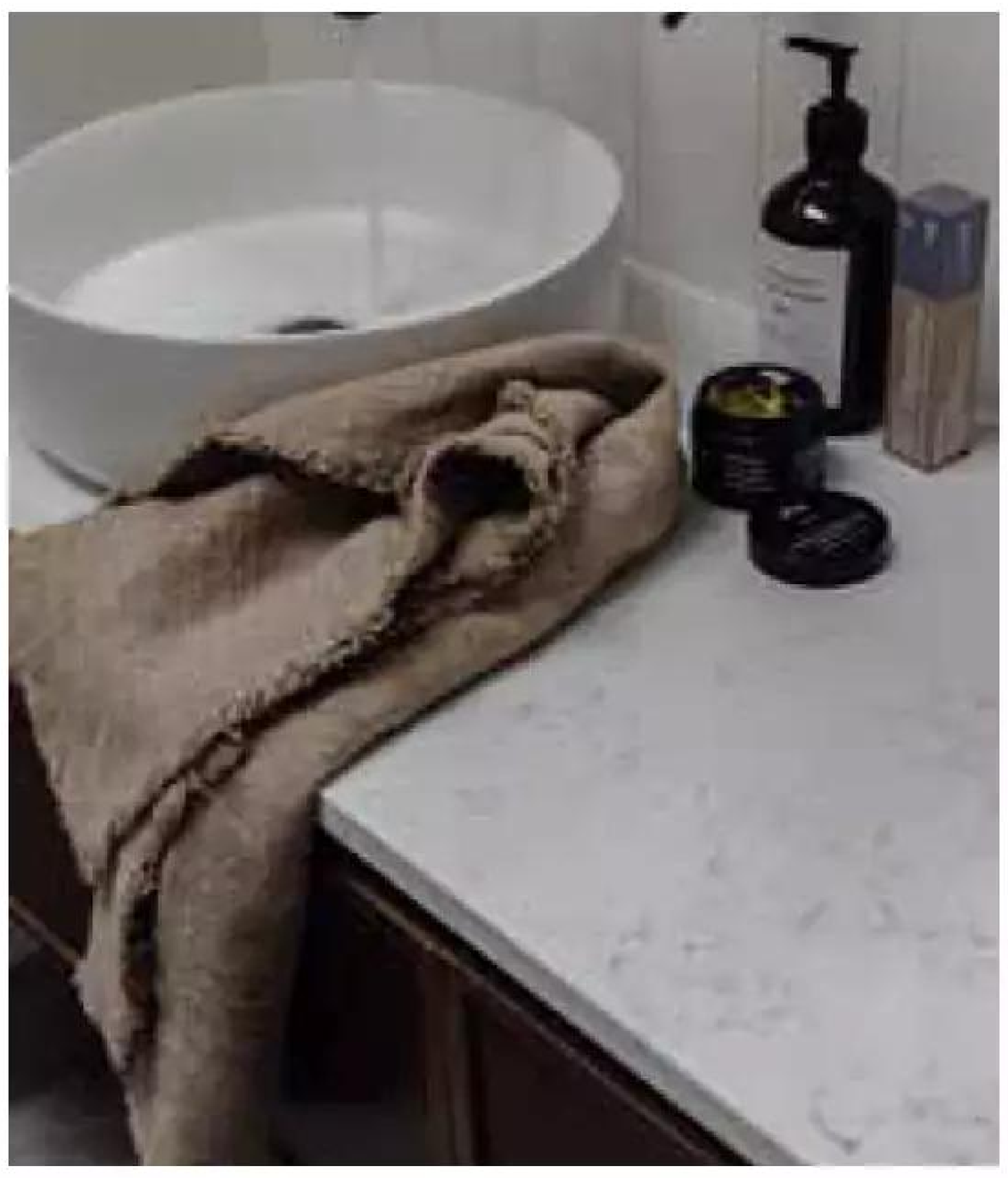
They work across styles—from rustic to modern, bohemian to industrial—and adapt effortlessly to different spaces.

Whether you're refreshing a living room, designing a boutique hotel suite, or curating a retail vignette, this trend offers a rich, resonant foundation.

SALT & STONE

beauty nestled in the heart of the Blue Mountains, Salt & Stone Interiors is a bespoke design studio known for transforming houses into deeply personal sanctuaries.

Led by the intuitive eye of Emily, their team specializes in full-scale interior design projects—from concept through completion—tailored to how clients live and feel at home.



Their design philosophy celebrates layered, textural interiors that radiate calm and refinement.

It's more than aesthetics—it's about crafting spaces that mirror the soul of their inhabitants.

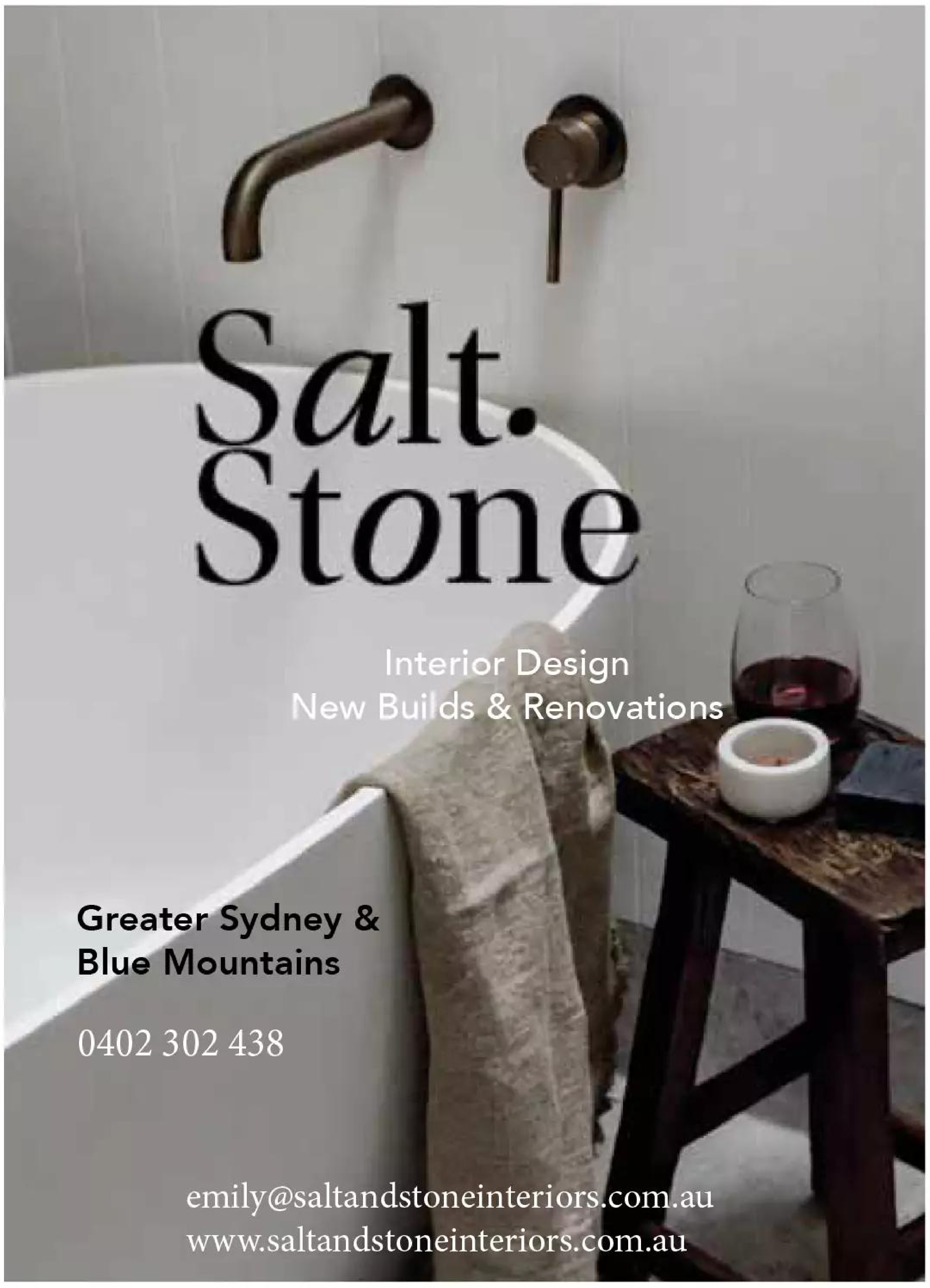
Whether you're building new or renovating, Salt & Stone brings clarity, creativity, and confidence to every step.

Clients across Greater Sydney, Western and South West Sydney praise their professionalism and warm collaboration.

From magazine-worthy results to Airbnb transformations, each space tells a story with intention and grace.

They also offer a free guide The No-Plan Pit helps homeowners avoid common renovation missteps.

Contact Emily: 0402 302 438 or visit wwwsaltandstoneinteriors.com.au



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LIQUID GOLD

ABUELO'S EGG CROQUETTES

recipe page 67

Garlic, olive oil + everything else
Daen Lia

Olive Oil + Everything Else

Daen Lia's Garlic, Olive Oil + Everything Else celebrates bold Mediterranean flavours with modern flair. From viral crumbed chicken to confit garlic and chilli oils, her recipes blend Spanish-Italian heritage with everyday ease. It's a vibrant, confident collection for lovers of garlic, butter, and irresistible textures. Garlic, Olive Oil + Everything Else, published by Plum, RRP $29.99, photography by Armelle Habib.

GARLIC BUTTER ROAST CHICKEN WITH JAMMY SHALLOTS

1 × 1.5 kg whole chicken
sea salt flakes
freshly ground black pepper
150 g Roasted Garlic Herb Butter (see page 18), at room temperature
1 teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 garlic bulb
½ lemon
¼ bunch of flat-leaf parsley
20 French shallots, peeled and halved
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Pat the chicken skin dry with a paper towel and generously season all over with salt and pepper. Sprinkle salt and pepper inside the cavity of the chicken. If you have time, leave the chicken to sit for 2 hours while it comes to room temperature. This step will act as a dry brine for the chicken and leave you with the juiciest meat.

Preheat the oven to 170°C conventional (150°C fan-forced).

Using your fingers, carefully separate the skin from the chicken breast and stuff each side with roughly 50 g of the butter. Season the chicken with the onion and garlic powder, then massage the remaining butter all over.

Using a sharp knife, slice the top off the garlic bulb, about 2–3 cm down from the top, to expose the raw cloves. Place the garlic bulb in the cavity of the chicken, along with the lemon and parsley. Tie the legs of the chicken together with a kitchen string – this will help the chicken cook evenly.

Place the chicken in a roasting tin and scatter the shallot around the chicken. Drizzle the shallot and chicken with the olive oil and season with a pinch of salt and pepper. Bake for 1 hour and 20 minutes or until the chicken is golden brown and completely cooked through and the shallot is nice and jammy.

Leave the chicken to rest for 10 minutes, then carve and serve with my simple salad and focaccia to mop up all those delicious juices. Serves 4.balsamic vinegar, olive oil, açaí, if using, salt and pepper, and Italian herbs, and stir until well blended. Drizzle over the tomato and tofu slices.

OLIVE CONFIT WITH WHIPPED RICOTTA & CREAM CHEESE

1 garlic bulb
350 g green olives
300 g kalamata olives
1 lemon, quartered
500ml extra-virgin olive oil
2 French shallots, peeled and halved
5 thyme sprigs
pinch of sea salt flakes
WHIPPED RICOTTA & CREAM CHEESE
200 g cream cheese
100 g ricotta
zest of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 teaspoons olive confit oil , plus 1 tablespoon extra for drizzling
2 teaspoons honey
pinch of sea salt flakes
pinch of black pepper

To make the olive confit, preheat the oven to 130°C conventional (110°C fan-forced). Separate all the cloves from the garlic bulb and place them in a heatproof bowl. Cover with boiling water and let sit for 5 minutes, then drain. The skins will become easy to peel off. Drain the olives, reserving the brine.Place all the confit ingredients in a large, deep ceramic baking dish. Bake for 2 hours. The oil should be bubbling slightly while cooking. Remove from the oven and leave to slightly cool. Place a bowl under a fine-mesh sieve and drain the olive oil from the olive confit. Reserve the oil. Place the olives and the other ingredients in a clean bowl. Spoon 3 tablespoons of the olive confit oil over the top. Reserve another 1 ½ tablespoons, then store the remaining oil in a glass jar in the fridge. It will have a mild lemon, garlic and olive flavour and can be used in any recipe that calls for olive oil.

To make the whipped ricotta and cream cheese, place all of the ingredients in a food processor and blend until well combined. Spoon into a bowl. Lightly drizzle the last tablespoon of olive confit oil over the slices of bread. In a frying pan over low heat, toast the bread for 5–10

GARLIC CONFIT POTATO MASH BAKE

1 kg sebago potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters
fine sea salt
40 Garlic Confit cloves
150 g butter, cut into small cubes
250 ml (1 cup) warm full-cream milk
2 tablespoons grated parmesan
finely snipped fresh chives, to serve

Place the potato in a large saucepan, cover with cold water and leave to sit for a minimum of 20 minutes and a maximum of 4 hours. Drain the potato and rinse under cold water. Return to the pan and cover with cold water, along with a generous amount of salt (roughly 2 tablespoons). Bring to the boil over high heat, then cook the potato for 15 minutes or until soft – a skewer or knife should be able to go through them with no resistance.

Drain the potato in a colander and cover with a tea towel. This will allow the potato to steam and remove as much moisture as possible. Leave to sit for 15 minutes.

Mash the garlic confit cloves with a fork and set aside. Preheat the oven grill to high.

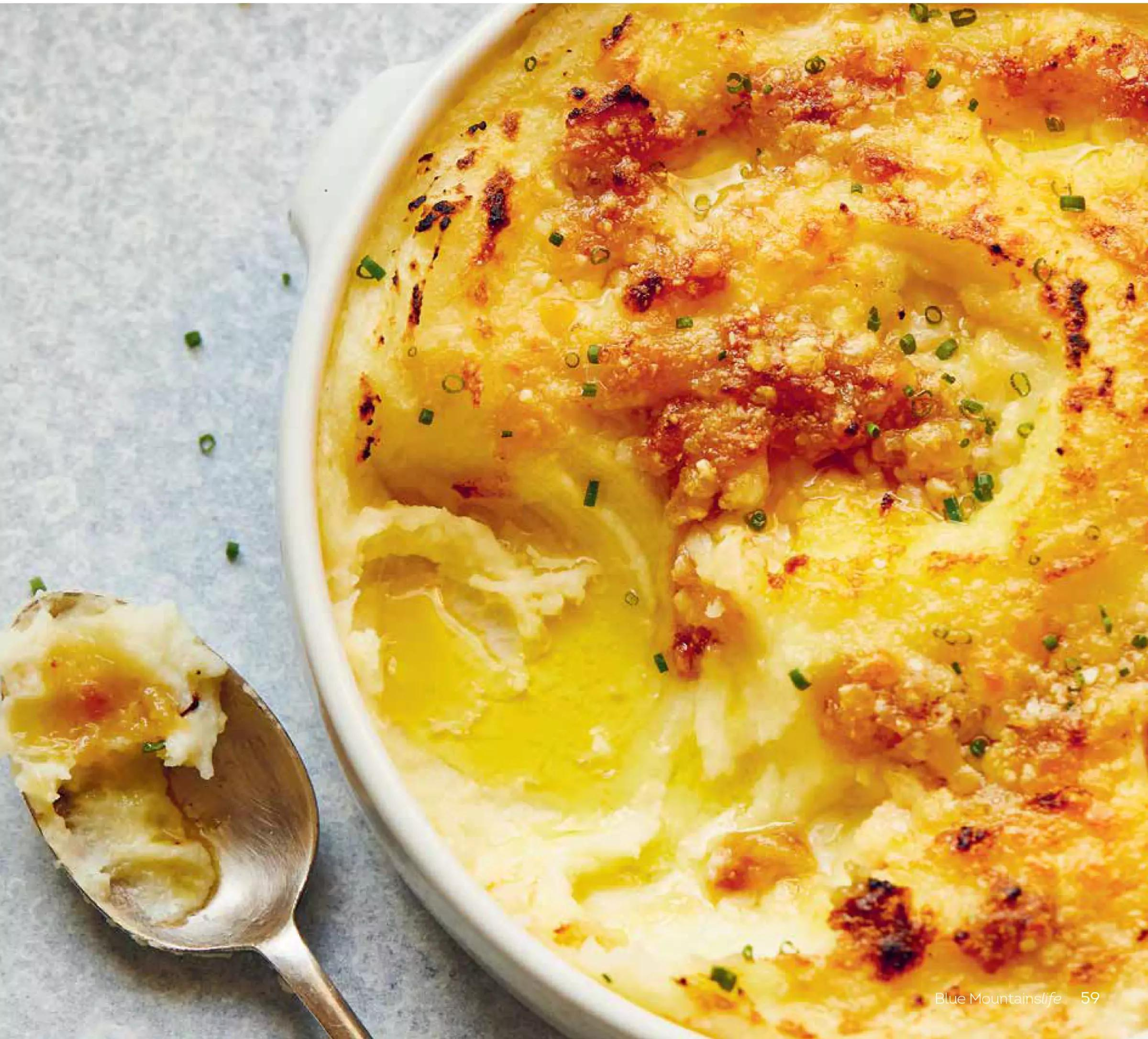
Over a large saucepan, pass the potato through a potato ricer or push through a fine-mesh sieve. In two batches, stir the garlic confit and two thirds of the butter through the potato with a spatula, until smooth and blended. Slowly incorporate the milk until you have a smooth consistency.

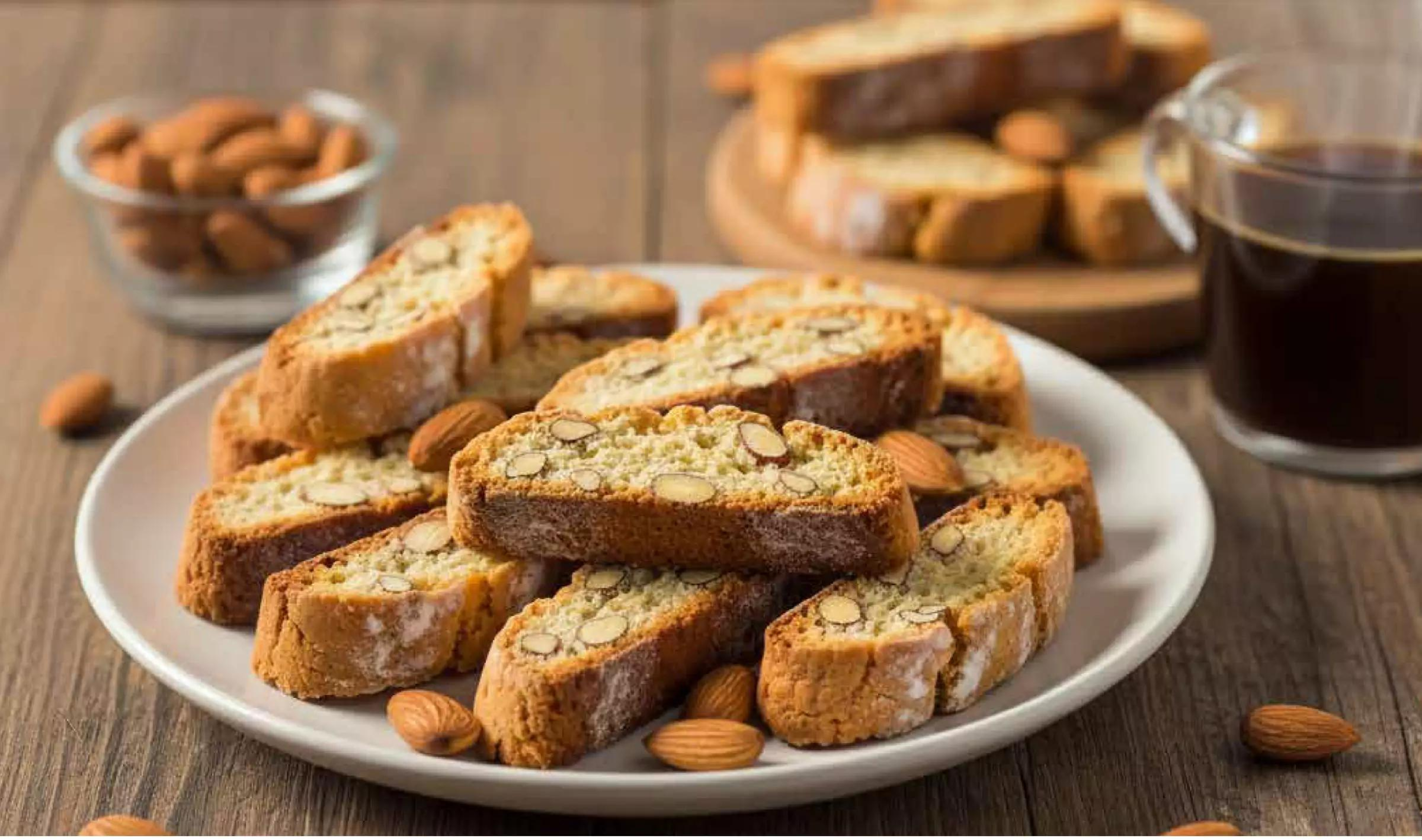
Place the potatoes mash in an ovenproof dish. Scatter the remaining cubes of butter on top and poke them into the mash so only the top is exposed. Sprinkle with the parmesan, then place under the grill for 7 minutes or until golden on top. Sprinkle with chives and serve diately. Serves 4.

ABUELO'S EGG CROQUETTES

6 eggs
iced water
100 ml extra-virgin olive oil
5 garlic cloves, crushed
140 g plain flour
500 ml (2 cups) full-cream milk
sea salt flakes
freshly ground black pepper
light olive oil, for frying
CRUMB
6 eggs
4 garlic cloves, crushed
4–6 cups breadcrumbs

Bring a saucepan of water to the boil, then reduce the heat to medium so the water is slowly simmering. ***CONTINUED PG 62***





JOURNEY TO ANTARCTICA

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Panorama Cruise & Travel's 2027 expedition kicks off with a Brazilian BBQ and samba-filled nights in Copacabana, before venturing to the thundering Iguazu Falls and the cultural heart of Argentina.

From Ushuaia, the gateway to the south, guests cross the legendary Drake Passage aboard the MS Roald Amundsen, bound for Antarctica and the Falkland Islands.

Expect five exhilarating days of landings, kayaking, hiking, and wildlife encounters—penguins, seals, and whales abound. Expert-led lectures deepen your understanding of this pristine continent, with optional overnight camping for the bold.

The journey concludes in Stanley, Falklands, where windswept landscapes and warm hospitality await.

With luxury cabins, gourmet dining, and immersive experiences, this small-group expedition is a rare blend of comfort, culture, and raw nature.

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BISCOTTI

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup whole almonds (unblanched and raw)
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon almond extract (optional, for a stronger almond flavour)

Preheat and Prepare: Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
Combine Dry Ingredients: In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt.
Mix Wet Ingredients: In a separate large bowl, using a hand mixer or a whisk, beat the eggs and sugar until the mixture is thick, pale yellow, and frothy. Stir in the vanilla and almond extracts (if using).
Form the Dough: Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients, mixing until a dough begins to form. The dough will be thick and may seem a little sticky. Gently fold in the whole almonds until they are evenly distributed. Do not overmix.
Shape the Logs: Divide the dough in half. On the prepared baking sheet, shape each half into a flattened log, about 10-12 inches long and 2-3 inches wide. Make sure the logs are placed a few inches apart to allow for spreading during the bake. For easier handling, you can lightly flour your hands.
First Bake: Place the baking sheet in the preheated oven and bake for 25-30 minutes, or until the logs are firm and lightly golden brown. A toothpick inserted into the centre should come out clean.
Cool and Slice: Remove the baking sheet from the oven and let the logs cool on the sheet for about 10-15 minutes. This is a crucial step—if you try to slice them while too hot, they will crumble. Once they are cool enough to handle, use a serrated knife to carefully slice each log on a slight diagonal into ½ to ¾-inch-thick pieces.
Second Bake (The "Biscotti" Step): Reduce the oven temperature to 325°F (165°C). Arrange the sliced biscotti cut-side down on the same baking sheet. Return them to the oven and bake for another 10-15 minutes, flipping them over halfway through, until they are golden brown and crisp on both sides.
Cool and Store: Transfer the finished biscotti to a wire rack and let them cool completely. Once cooled, store them in an airtight container at room temperature. They can last for up to two weeks.

AVLI

Avli is an intimate Greek restaurant in the heart of Cranebrook, where history, culture, and cuisine come together.

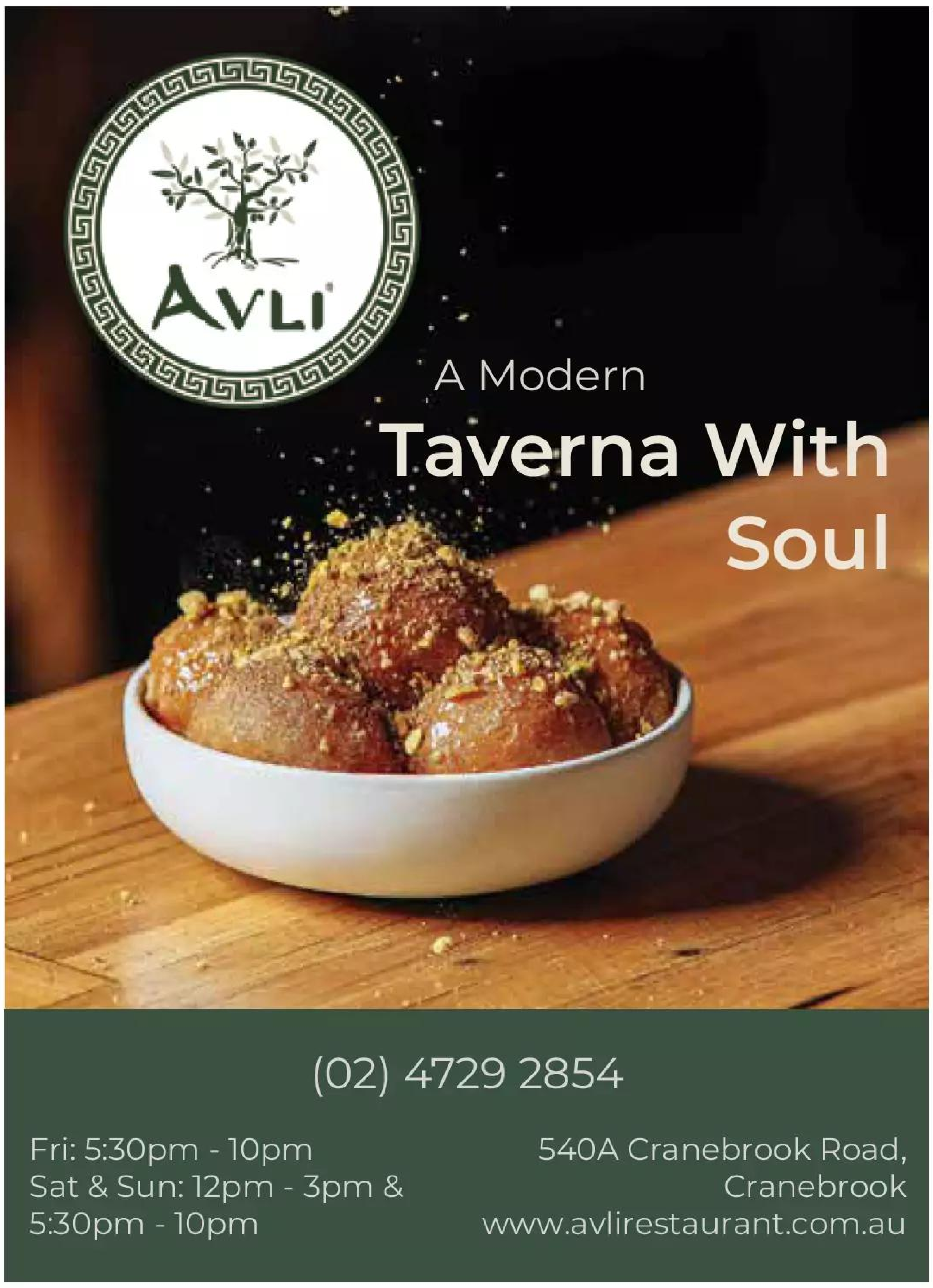
Born from a love for Greek traditions, Avli celebrates the essence of Greek life — food, drink, and hospitality — with every dish and glass poured.

The menu honours Mediterranean roots with a modern twist: smoky grilled octopus, slow-cooked lamb, and zesty cocktails infused with mastiha and native citrus.

Each bite tells a story, inviting diners to linger, savour, and connect. After a brief closure, Avli has reopened with renewed passion and a refined experience, blending soulful flavours with warm hospitality.

Its rustic, elegant setting evokes the timeless charm of Greece, whether you're sharing mezze with family or discovering Greek cuisine for the first time.

More than a restaurant, Avli is a journey — one that honours the past, celebrates the present, and invites you to create new memories together.



(02) 4729 2854

Fri: 5:30pm - 10pm
Sat & Sun: 12pm - 3pm &
5:30pm - 10pm

540A Cranebrook Road,
Cranebrook
www.avlirestaurant.com.au

CONT FROM PAGE 59

Carefully add the eggs and cook for 12 minutes, then place them in an ice bath for 10 minutes. This will prevent the eggs from cooking and further and allow them to cool slightly so they are easy to peel.

Remove the eggs from the ice bath. Tap the bottom of an egg on a hard surface to break the shell. Remove a small piece of shell until the membrane is exposed. Insert your finger under the membrane and peel off the shell.

Repeat with the remaining eggs.

Place the peeled eggs in a bowl and mash with a fork or potato masher until you have a fine and crumbly texture. Set aside.

Heat the extra-virgin olive oil in a large, deep non-stick frying pan over medium – low heat and fry the garlic for 2 minutes or until slightly fragrant. It's very important that the garlic does not burn or brown.

Increase the heat to medium and add the flour. Stir it through for 2–3 minutes, until you have a gritty roux.

Add the milk, 125 ml (½ cup) at a time, to the roux and mix through after each addition until fully incorporated. You will need to stir quite vigorously as the dough begins to thicken up, so brace yourself for an arm workout! The roux will start to form a ball and be quite soft in texture.

Take the pan off the heat, add the egg, and stir it through, along with

a generous amount of salt and pepper. Taste the mixture and adjust to your preference.

Spoon the mixture onto a large plate (you may need two plates) and flatten it out until it's 2 cm thick. Cover, place in the fridge, and leave to cool for a minimum of 2 hours but ideally overnight.

For the crumb, in a wide shallow bowl, whisk together the eggs and garlic and set aside.

Set up a dredging station. Have a plate with the breadcrumbs, then a bowl with the egg wash and finally a large clean plate or tray to place the croquettes on.

Take roughly 1 tablespoon of the egg mixture in your hands and roll it into a fat cigar shape about 6 cm long. Cup this shape firmly in your hands to mould it into a croquette.

Roll the croquette in the breadcrumbs, then in the egg wash, ensuring it's evenly coated. Roll it in the breadcrumbs a second time, then transfer to the clean plate. Repeat with the remaining mixture.

Fill a large frying pan over high heat with a generous amount of light olive oil – about 2–3 cm deep. Heat the olive oil until bubbles form around a wooden skewer inserted upright in the pan. Reduce the heat to medium – low and fry 3–4 croquettes at a time for 4 minutes on each side or until golden and crispy. Transfer to a cooling rack.

Serve immediately. Makes about 16.for 5 minutes, until warm and combined.

Combine the quinoa, tempeh, kale, cucumber, bell pepper, avocado, capers, scallion, and sunflower seeds and kelp, if using, in a large bowl. To make dressing, combine all ingredients in a small glass jar or bowl and stir together with a fork until creamy, adding water if necessary to thin.

ABUELO'S EGG CROQUETTES

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Pullman Sydney Penrith – where your weekend becomes a work of art. **www.pullmanpenrith.com.au**

ALMOND TUILE BISCUITS

1 large egg white
50g golden caster sugar
25g plain flour
A few drops each of vanilla and almond extract
25g melted butter (unsalted)
40g flaked almonds

Prep the oven: Preheat to 220°C (200°C fan). Line two baking trays with non-stick baking paper.
Whisk the egg white: Beat until stiff but not dry.
Add sugar gradually: Continue whisking until soft peaks form.
Fold in flour, extracts, and butter: Gently combine until smooth.
Shape the tuiles: Drop teaspoons of mixture onto tray, spread into thin 10cm discs.
Top with almonds: Sprinkle flaked almonds over each disc.
Bake: 4–5 minutes until golden with a brown fringe.
Shape while warm: Lift each tuile with a spatula and drape over a rolling pin to curve. Cool until crisp.
Store: Once cool, keep in an airtight tin to maintain crunch.

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A TASTE OF NAPLES

PRODUCT OF ITALY IN SPRINGWOOD IS SETTING THE STANDARD FOR CASUAL DINING IN THE REGION.

BY VANESSA MACE

In the heart of Springwood is a restaurant that's fast becoming a local institution.

Known as Product of Italy, with its timber-accented interiors, open layout, and a menu that reads like a regional tour of Italy's culinary soul, this local favourite delivers both comfort and flair.

Whether you're popping in for a midweek lunch or settling in for a long dinner, Product of Italy Springwood serves up a menu that's expansive, inclusive, and deeply satisfying.

It's a place where Nonna's recipes meet modern indulgence — and where even the most familiar dishes surprise you with their depth.

The regular menu is a celebration of Italian staples — pizzas, pastas, antipasti, and salads — all executed with a confident hand and generous spirit. The garlic bread and bruschetta are crowd-pleasers, but the real magic begins with the pasta.

Among the standouts, and one which we tried, is the Pollo Pesto — a creamy, herbaceous dish that balances richness with freshness. Chicken breast, basil, pine nuts, garlic, and parmesan come together in a velvety sauce that clings beautifully to the pasta. It's indulgent without being heavy, and every bite feels like a warm hug from the Italian countryside.

The Polpette — veal meatballs in mamma's Napoli sauce — is another highlight. Simmered to tenderness and finished with pecorino romano and fresh parsley, it's rustic, soulful, and unapologetically comforting.

> Each dish is curated with restraint and confidence

Pizza lovers will find themselves spoiled for choice. With almost 30 varieties across three sizes, the options range from the classic Margherita to the bold "Product of Italy" pizza, topped with prawns, spicy salami, cherry tomatoes, and fresh basil. Gluten-free and vegan bases are available, and the build-your-own option allows for endless customisation.

Vegetarians are well catered for too, with dishes like Spinach and Ricotta Cannelloni, Eggplant Parmigiana, and the Vegana pizza — all showcasing the kitchen's respect for produce and flavour.

The specials menu leans into refinement, offering premium proteins and thoughtful pairings that elevate the dining experience.

It's here that the Chicken Schnitzel makes its mark — lightly crumbed, perfectly golden, and served with your choice of sides. The schnitzel is crisp on the outside, juicy within, and generously portioned. Paired with a creamy vodka sauce, it's a dish that surprises with its elegance and balance.

Other specials include the O'Connor Angus Scotch Fillet and Rib Eye, served with garlic butter broccolini or avo salad, and the Atlantic Salmon with garlic spinach and balsamic-glazed cherry tomatoes.

Each dish is curated with restraint and confidence, allowing the ingredients to speak for themselves.

Sides are simple but well-executed: thyme mushrooms, garden salad, and those addictive chips round out the offering.

Adding to its charm, Product of Italy Springwood features a gelato and ice cream window — a delightful touch that brings

a slice of Italian summer to the footpath. Whether you're strolling through town or waiting for a table, the window offers a quick, sweet escape with scoops of creamy gelato and classic ice cream flavours.

It's a magnet for kids, locals, and passers-by alike, and a clever way to extend the restaurant's hospitality beyond its walls. On warm afternoons, the scent of waffle cones and the sight of colourful scoops make it impossible not to stop.

For those on the move, Product of Italy also offers a full takeaway menu — ideal for busy locals, commuters, or anyone craving Italian comfort at home.

From wood-fired pizzas to pasta favourites and even breakfast options on weekends, the takeaway service is fast, reliable, and true to the dine-in experience. You can order ahead online or via their app, and regulars will appreciate the 10% discount offered for app orders.

It's a thoughtful extension of the brand's ethos: good food, made accessible, without compromise.

Service at Product of Italy is warm, efficient, and refreshingly unpretentious. Staff are attentive without hovering, and the vibe is relaxed enough for families while still feeling polished enough for date night.

The décor blends rustic charm with contemporary touches — exposed brick, pendant lighting, and both an indoor and outdoor section make it the kind of place where laughter echoes, wine flows, and plates are passed around with gusto.

Product of Italy Springwood is more than a restaurant — it's a celebration of Italian culture, community, and cuisine.

With a menu that honours tradition while embracing variety, it offers something for everyone: the purist, the adventurer, the comfort-seeker.

Whether you're craving a classic Napoli-style pizza, a rich bowl of pasta, or a perfectly crisp schnitzel, this local favourite delivers with heart and flavour.

The Pollo Pesto and Chicken Schnitzel — both sampled and savoured by Blue Mountains Life — are proof that even the simplest dishes, when done right, can leave a lasting impression.

And if you're just passing by?

The gelato window is waiting — a scoop of Italy, no reservation required. Or take the experience home with a takeaway order that's every bit as satisfying. BML

DISCOVER **LA MILANO**

A TASTE OF ITALY IN THE HEART OF ORANGE.

In the picturesque wine region of Orange, a culinary gem is blazing a trail of authentic Italian flavour, fired by tradition and a celebration of modern Australian culture. Welcome to La Milano, the home of exquisite woodfired pizza, handcrafted pasta, and a dining experience that feels like a warm Italian embrace.

At La Milano, the philosophy is simple: exceptional ingredients make exceptional food. Their menu is a vibrant testament to this, focused on traditional Italian techniques while embracing the bounty of local Australian produce. The star of the show is undeniably the woodfired pizza. Each crust is a masterpiece, perfectly charred and chewy, serving as the foundation for a careful selection of ingredients, from authentic Italian cheeses and cured meats to the freshest seasonal produce sourced right from the region. Whether you're a purist craving a classic Margherita or seeking the bold flavours of their signature Milano Special, every pizza tells a story of passion and tradition.

But the experience doesn't end with pizza. La Milano's culinary repertoire extends to mouthwatering pasta dishes, rich seafood, and delectable desserts like the classic Tiramisu. It is a full-scale Italian trattoria, bringing the breadth of Italy's diverse regions to the New South Wales table.

La Milano's vision is about more than just food; it's about community and culture. The restaurant was created to celebrate the "multicultural symphony of Australia," weaving Italian heritage into the fabric of Orange's vibrant dining scene. Located right on 58 Summer St, it's a destination for locals and tourists alike, providing a cosy and lively atmosphere perfect for any occasion, from a family dinner to a celebratory night out.

Whether you're booking a table to soak up the atmosphere or simply ordering online for a quick, high-quality takeaway, La Milano promises a genuine Italian culinary journey that satisfies the soul. If you find yourself in Orange, make sure to follow the aroma of woodsmoke and fine food—you'll find it leads straight to La Milano.

LaMilano
Italian

58 Summer St, Orange
Ph: 02 5353 0184
www.lamilano.com.au

LA MILANO BOOK NOW!

Gardners Inn

A HERITAGE HAVEN FOR DINING, CELEBRATIONS, AND RETREATS.

BY JACKIE LONG

Tucked away in the heart of Blackheath, Gardners Inn is more than just a hotel — it's a living piece of Blue Mountains history.

As the oldest continuously licensed hotel in the region, it blends timeless charm with modern comfort, offering guests a warm, welcoming escape in one of Australia's most scenic destinations.

Gardners Inn features two distinct dining areas, each with its own character. One is a beautifully restored Art Deco dining room, where vintage elegance meets contemporary cuisine.

The other offers a more relaxed, rustic atmosphere — perfect for casual meals and hearty conversations.

The menu is a celebration of Australian flavours, infused with both Western and Eastern influences. Their signature Beef and Guinness pies are a local favourite, delivering comfort and bold taste in every bite.

For couples getting married in the Blue Mountains, Gardners Inn is an ideal place to gather family, friends, and loved ones.

Whether it's a pre-wedding dinner, a relaxed meet-up between ceremony and reception, or a cozy brunch the morning after, the Inn provides a versatile and charming setting.

Its central location on the Great Western Highway makes it easily accessible, and its warm ambiance makes every moment feel special.

Accommodation at Gardners Inn is steeped in character. The 23 rooms have been thoughtfully updated to offer modern amenities while preserving the building's historic soul. Whether you're staying for a romantic weekend or hosting guests for a wedding, the Inn offers comfort, charm, and convenience.

Outside, the garden area offers a peaceful retreat — ideal for morning coffee, quiet reflection, or candid wedding photos. It's a space where nature and nostalgia meet, making Gardners Inn a truly unforgettable destination.

GARDNERS INN
WELCOMING TRAVELLERS SINCE 1831

A unique blend of historic charm and modern comfort.

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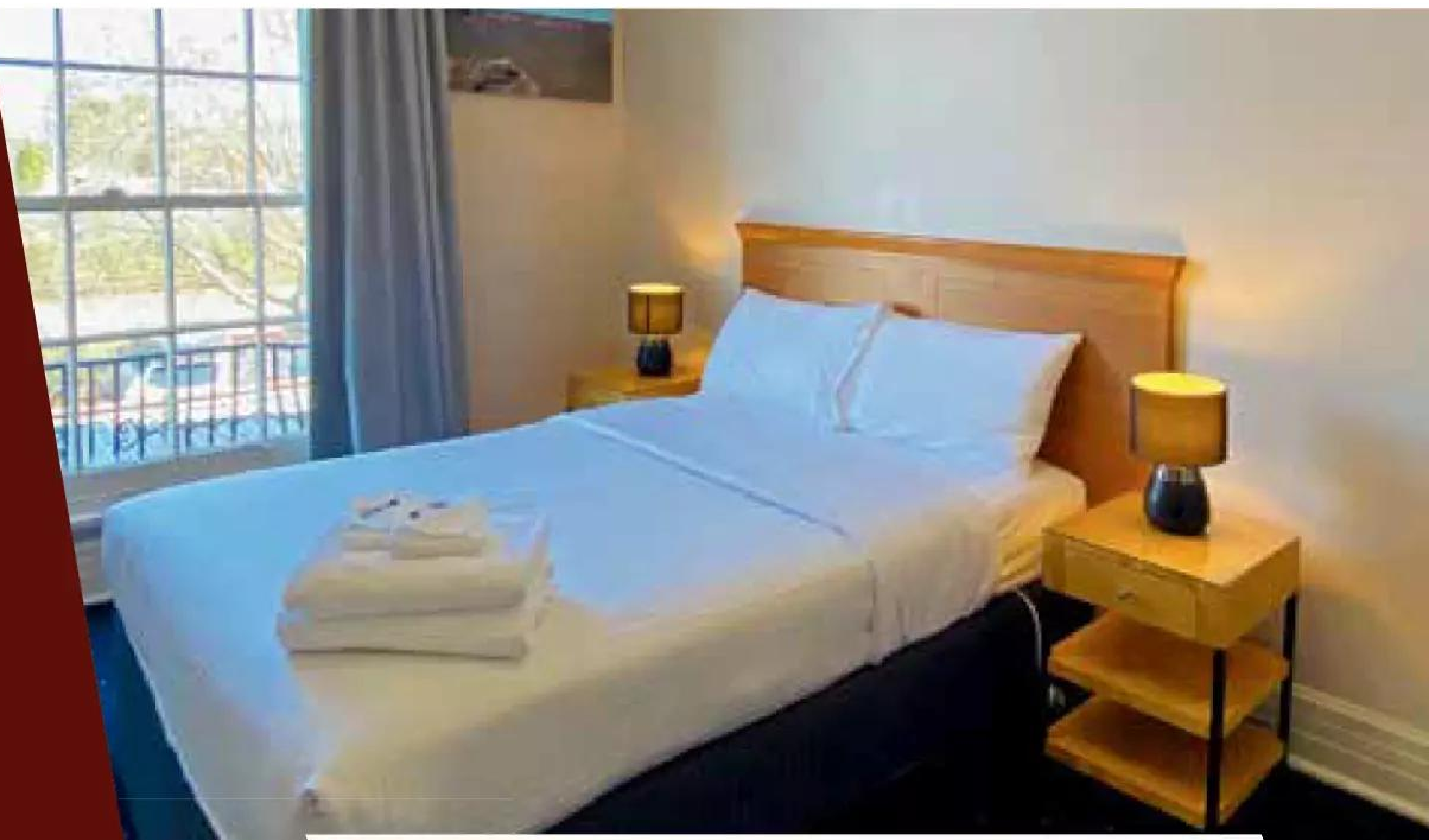

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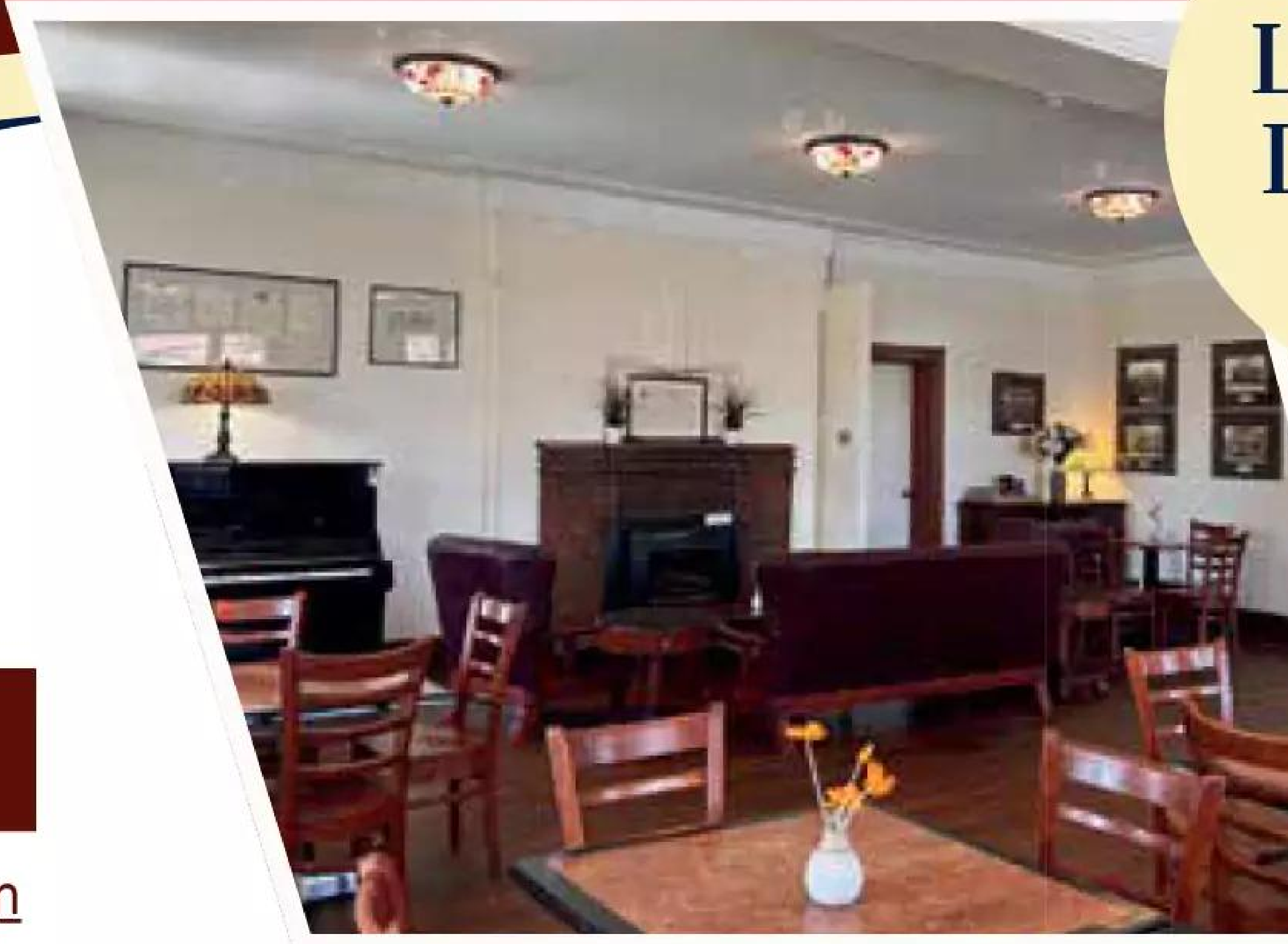

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BOOK NOW

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gardnersinnres@gmail.com

VICTORIA BITTER
VB
GREAT NORTHERN
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Hidden Gem

The Ophir Hotel's Recipe for Family-Friendly Charm in Orange.

tucked away in the heart of Orange, the Ophir Hotel is more than just a local pub — it's a vibrant community hub where families come to unwind, indulge, and reconnect.

With its award-winning menu, spacious beer garden, and playground that keeps kids happily occupied, it's easy to see why the Ophir is winning hearts beyond the region.

Step into the restaurant and you're greeted by a modern pub atmosphere, where hearty classics are served with flair.

The menu caters to all ages and appetites—from perfectly crisp schnitzels and melt-in-your-mouth steaks to pizzas and creamy pasta.

For the little ones, there's a dedicated kids' menu packed with familiar favorites.

The generous lunch and dinner sittings make it an easy choice for weekend outings or weeknight escapes.

But the Ophir isn't just about food. Their accommodation options provide clean, comfortable, and budget-friendly rooms—a convenient base for travelers or families seeking a short break in Orange.

Add in the fact that live music, karaoke nights, and seasonal events are regular fixtures here, and you've got all the ingredients for a memorable family stay.

Parents can enjoy a cocktail in the cabanas while the kids explore the playground just meters away, making it a rare venue that truly balances adult relaxation with child-friendly fun.

So whether you're passing through or planning a weekend getaway, the Ophir Hotel offers more than a meal—it's an experience that blends comfort, entertainment, and community in one warm, welcoming package.

Locals call it a second home. Visitors tend to call it their next favorite place.

Check out their menu and specials at www.ophirhotel.com.au.

84 GLENROI AV, ORANGE
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OPHIRHOTEL.COM.AU

THE
OPHIR
HOTEL

A MAGICAL CHRISTMAS DAY CELEBRATION

Nestled in the heart of the Blue Mountains, Hotel Mountain Heritage blends historic charm with modern comfort, offering an inviting setting for a festive celebration. With views overlooking the Jamison Valley, it's the perfect destination for family and friends to create lasting memories this Christmas.

This Christmas, the hotel invites guests to an exquisite 5-course degustation lunch, starting with a complimentary sparkling wine on arrival, setting the tone for a truly special day. Guests will delight in a thoughtfully crafted menu featuring creamy cauliflower soup with truffle and chives to start, a refreshing cold seafood salad for entrée, and a succulent lamb saddle stuffed with spiced fruit and spinach, accompanied by mushroom and broad beans for the main course. The meal concludes with a traditional Christmas cake served with mixed berry compote and custard, followed by an assortment of delicate petit fours.

Children are also in for a treat, with a specially designed kids' menu including ham and salad, chicken tenders with chips, and a vanilla trifle. Adding to the festive ambiance, the hotel's resident pianist will play seasonal melodies, while Santa Claus makes a surprise visit to bring joy to the little ones.

Conveniently located in Katoomba, just 90 minutes from Sydney, Hotel Mountain Heritage offers a magical Christmas escape in the stunning Blue Mountains. Make this festive season truly memorable - celebrate in elegance, tradition, and style.

For bookings and further details, visit mountainheritage.com.au or call +61 2 4782 2155.

Mountain Heritage
HOTEL • BLUE MOUNTAINS • AUSTRALIA

CHRISTMAS Lunch

Plus
Enjoy live entertainment and a surprise visit from Santa!

THURSDAY 25 DECEMBER • 12PM - 2.30PM
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INDULGE IN A 5-COURSE DEGUSTATION LUNCH WITH SEASONAL FLAVOURS AND A GLASS OF SPARKLING ON ARRIVAL.
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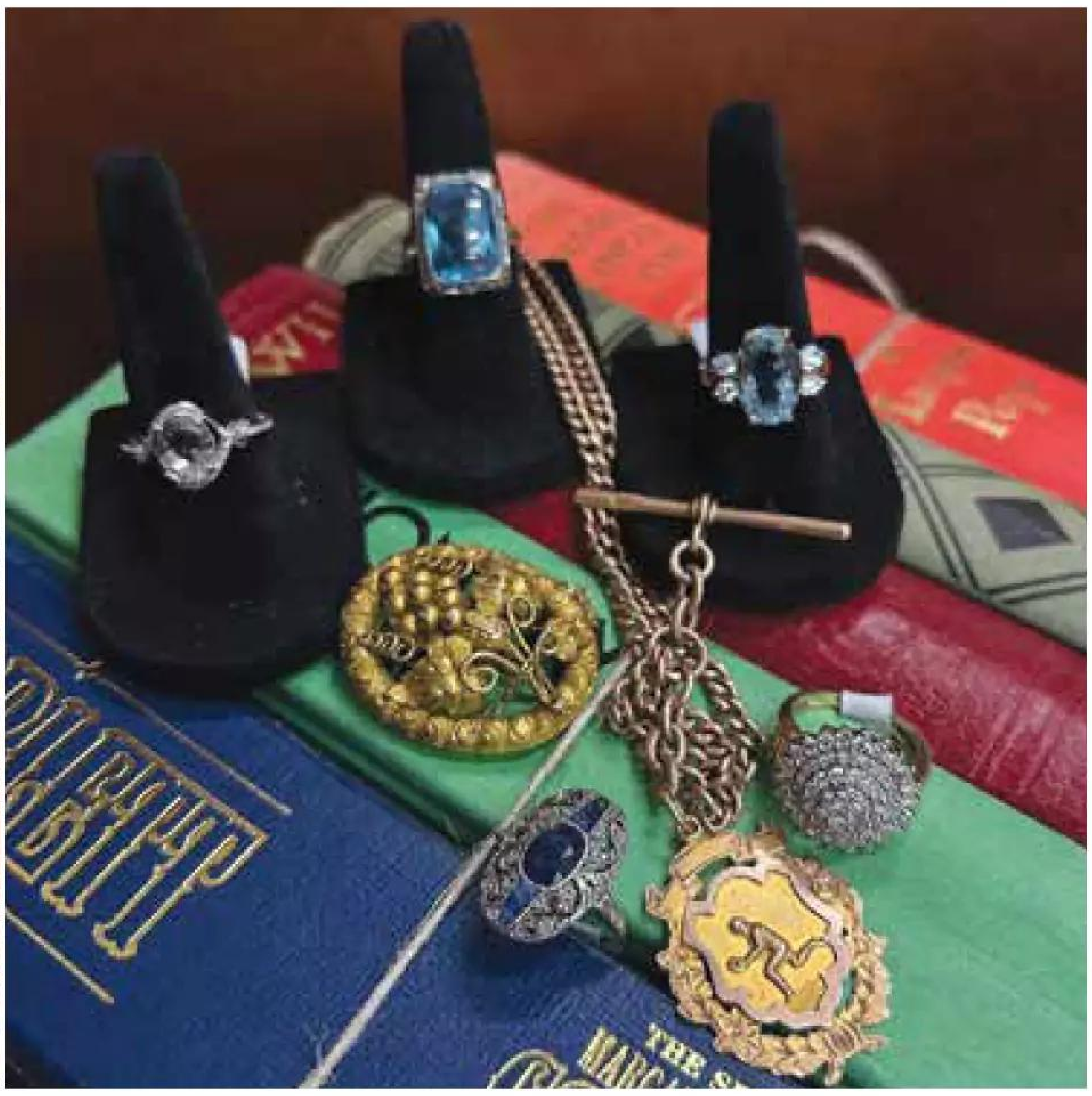
BOOK NOW

*T&C's apply | Booking fee applies | Must be accompanied by at least one full paying adult per child.
Full pre payment required at the time of reservation. No refunds, amendments or cancellations 2 weeks prior.

Hotel Mountain Heritage, 6-10 Apex Street, Katoomba (02) 4782 2155 • MOUNTAINHERITAGE.COM.AU



HIS PICKS COLLECTIVE

ANTIQUE AND VINTAGE JEWELLERY: A TIMELESS TREASURE FROM HIS PICKS COLLECTIVE

Jewellery has long been a symbol of elegance, sentiment, and craftsmanship, but there's something truly special about antique and vintage pieces. These treasures, whether passed down through generations or discovered in the most unexpected of places, offer a unique blend of history, artistry, and timeless beauty.

At His Picks Collective, we celebrate the allure of antique and vintage jewellery, offering a curated collection that brings these extraordinary pieces into the modern world.

Antique jewellery, generally defined as items over 100 years old, showcases the intricate techniques and timeless styles of eras gone by. Whether it's the opulent designs of the Victorian era or the geometric precision of Art Deco, each piece tells a story of its time. Vintage jewellery, typically classified as pieces from the 20th century, brings its own flair with more modern materials, techniques, and trends. Together, these categories represent the perfect blend of nostalgia and sophistication.

At His Picks Collective, we understand that the appeal of antique and vintage jewellery goes beyond aesthetics. Each piece carries its own narrative—an heirloom passed down, a milestone in time, or a unique find that sparks joy. Our collection is carefully selected to offer not just exquisite designs but pieces with personal stories waiting to be told. From delicate brooches to statement rings, each item in our collection has been chosen with care to appeal to the discerning collector and jewellery enthusiast.

Whether you're looking to add a piece of history to your collection or seeking that perfect gift with a touch of timeless elegance, His Picks Collective is the destination for those who appreciate the beauty and craftsmanship of antique and vintage jewellery. Step into a world where every piece has a story to tell—one that continues to shine through the ages.

Come visit His Picks Collective and uncover something truly special! Our moto is, your next treasure awaits. Note: given the individual nature of our jewellery, availability can not be guaranteed,

His Picks Collective

His Picks Collectives stocks a huge and eclectic range of vintage and retro antiques, collectables, vintage clothes, jewellery and much more.

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Monday - Friday 10:00am - 5:30pm
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BYGONE BEAUTYS

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BYGONE BEAUTYS
TREASURED TEAPOT MUSEUM
Antiques, Collectables & Tearoom
www.bygonebeautys.com.au

Nestled in the heart of Leura, within the breathtaking Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, Bygone Beautys Treasured Teapot Museum & Tearooms is a destination unlike any other.

Whether you're a tea enthusiast, a lover of antiques, or simply someone who appreciates old-world charm, this unique establishment promises an experience steeped in tradition and elegance.

Home to the world's largest private collection of teawares, Bygone Beautys boasts over 11,000 teapots spanning five centuries and sourced from across the globe. The museum showcases these treasures, offering visitors a glimpse into the artistry and history of tea culture.

But the magic doesn't stop there—Bygone Beautys is also renowned for its silver service Traditional High Tea, a theatrical experience that transports guests to a more gracious era.

Served on fine bone china with antique silverware, this indulgent affair includes a selection of boutique teas, delicate finger sandwiches, freshly baked scones, and exquisite petit fours.

Beyond the tearooms, visitors can explore the Retail Emporium, a treasure trove of estate jewellery, antiques, collectables, and contemporary gifts. Whether you're searching for a timeless piece of jewellery, a rare antique, or a unique gift, Bygone Beautys offers an array of high-quality items that reflect the elegance of bygone eras.

The charm of Bygone Beautys is further enhanced by its proprietor, Maurice Cooper OAM, affectionately known as The Teapot Man.

Often found at the front desk, Maurice embodies the spirit of the establishment, sharing stories and assisting customers with his signature bow tie and warm hospitality.

Whether you're indulging in a luxurious high tea, exploring the Museum's vast collection, or discovering a hidden gem in The Emporium, this enchanting destination is a must-visit for anyone seeking a touch of nostalgia and refinement.

Bygone Beautys
TREASURED TEAPOT MUSEUM
& TEAROOMS

1800 663 619
www.bygonebeautys.com.au

Bygone Beautys Retail Emporium is a Treasure Trove offering a wide range of tea and tea related items, jewellery, antiques and collectables for sale.

We buy antiques and collectables.
We are prepared to travel anywhere in Australia to inspect and negotiate.

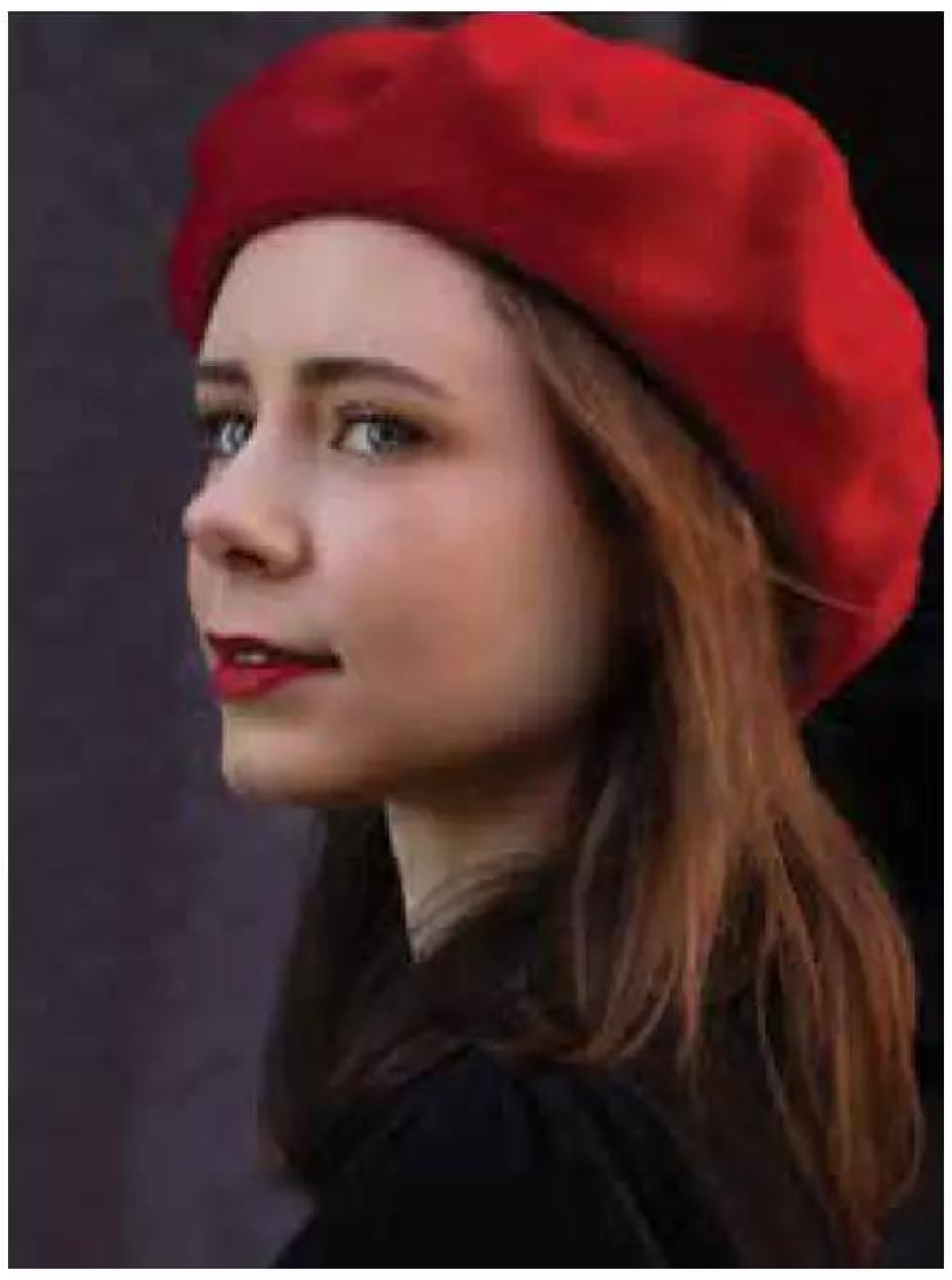
**Cnr Grose & Megalong Streets, Leura, NSW 2780,
Blue Mountains, Australia**

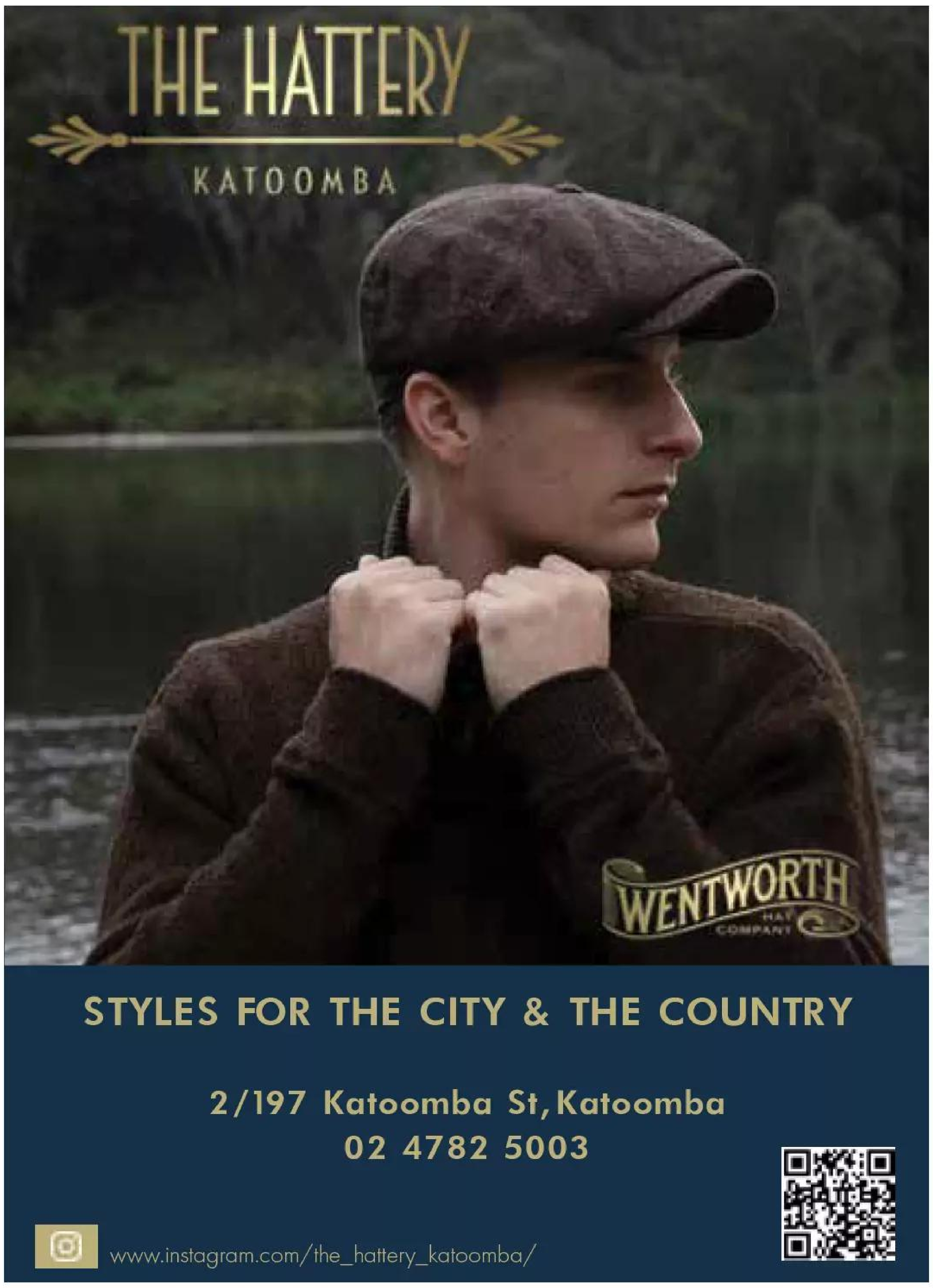
THE HATTERY

The Hattery, Katoomba's premier hat boutique, has been a go-to destination for quality headwear for over 30 years. Specializing in iconic Akubra hats and durable Barmah bush hats crafted from kangaroo and cattle leather, the store caters to adventurers and fashion enthusiasts alike. Its diverse collection includes North American brands Brixton & Stetson, alongside British artisans Dents and Christy's.

To further its legacy, The Hattery launched the Wentworth Hat Company—an exclusive, premium range blending tradition with modern sophistication. The store also showcases independent milliners and seasonal designs, from warm Possum-Merino & Cashmere in winter to fine straws and silks in summer.

With expert staff and a constantly evolving selection, The Hattery offers a unique shopping experience in the heart of the Blue Mountains. Whether you're a longtime collector or a first-time buyer, this iconic store ensures you find the perfect hat with quality, craftsmanship, and style.





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TWO RITUALS
ONE PHILOSOPHY

Tucked into the tranquil heart of the Blue Mountains, The Stray Whisker is a destination for those who appreciate the quiet pleasures of well-made things.

At first glance, the combination of premium men's grooming products and fine stationery may seem unexpected.

But for us, the connection is clear — both speak to the value of ritual, of craftsmanship, and of slowing down in a fast-moving world.

A traditional wet shave is more than a grooming task; it is a moment of focus and self-respect.

Likewise, the act of writing by hand — with a beautifully balanced fountain pen, on paper that accepts ink with grace — invites clarity and presence. In both, there is a certain deliberateness. A moment reclaimed.

What unites our carefully selected grooming tools and writing instruments is a shared respect for materials, function, and tradition.

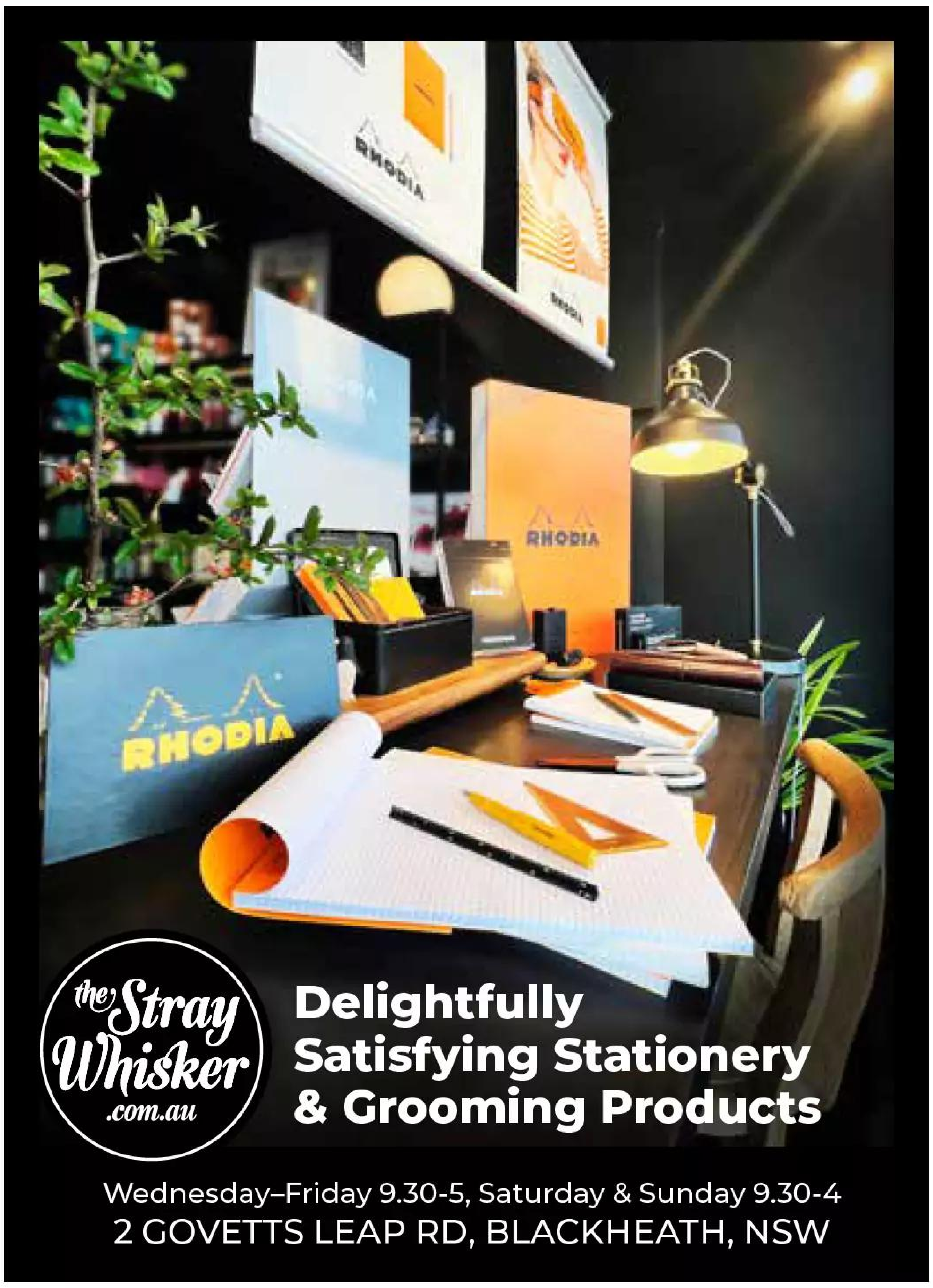
These are tools made to last, chosen not only for how they perform, but for how they feel in the hand — and the small yet lasting sense of satisfaction they bring.

While The Stray Whisker was born from a love of classic men's grooming, our collection continues to evolve.

Today, it draws in a wide and loyal clientele — men and women alike — who come not only for the essentials, but for the atmosphere: thoughtful, refined, and quietly personal.

Whether you're beginning your day with a restorative shave, planning it on a fresh page, or reflecting on it with a few well-chosen words, we believe life is richer when lived with care.

We simply offer the tools to help you shape it — one page, one ritual at a time.



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TRANSFORM **YOUR SPACE**

DISCOVER THE POWER OF HAND-SELECTED CRYSTALS.

BY JULIE WALKER

Collier's Crystals has been enchanting visitors in Blackheath for decades.

This family owned and operated business is renowned for its extensive collection of hand-selected crystals, gemstones, and mineral specimens sourced from around the globe. Whether you're a seasoned collector or a curious newcomer, Collier's Crystals offers something for everyone.

At Collier's Crystals, you'll find a dazzling array of crystals and gemstones, each with its unique properties and beauty.

From the calming Amethyst clusters to the grounding Red Jasper massage wands, the store's selection is both diverse and meticulously curated. The shop also features stunning jewellery pieces, including Clear Quartz earrings and Faceted Peridot drop earrings, perfect for adding a touch of elegance to any outfit.

What sets Collier's Crystals apart is their commitment to ethical sourcing. Like the new Crystals Lights made in Australia.

The team at Collier's select each crystal and specimen, ensuring that they are not only beautiful but also responsibly sourced. This dedication to quality and ethics has earned them a loyal customer base and a reputation for excellence. Crystals are more than just beautiful objects; they are believed to bring peace, tranquillity, and harmony to any space.

Whether you're looking to create a serene home environment or a calming workplace, Collier's Crystals has the perfect piece for you. Their collection includes everything from polished stones and carvings to natural quartz and fossils, each chosen for its unique energy and aesthetic appeal.

Collier's Crystals is more than just a store; it's a trusted destination for crystal enthusiasts.

With gift vouchers, layby, complimentary gift wrapping, same-day dispatch and international shipping, they make it easy to find and send the perfect gift, in store or online.

Their knowledgeable staff is always on hand to help you find exactly what you're looking for, whether it's a specific crystal or a unique piece of jewellery.

Located at Shop 8/23-25 Govetts Leap Road, Blackheath, Collier's Crystals is open seven days a week.

Whether you're visiting in person or shopping online, you're sure to find something special.

ww.collierscrystals.com.au

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& GIFTS

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Bear Bliss

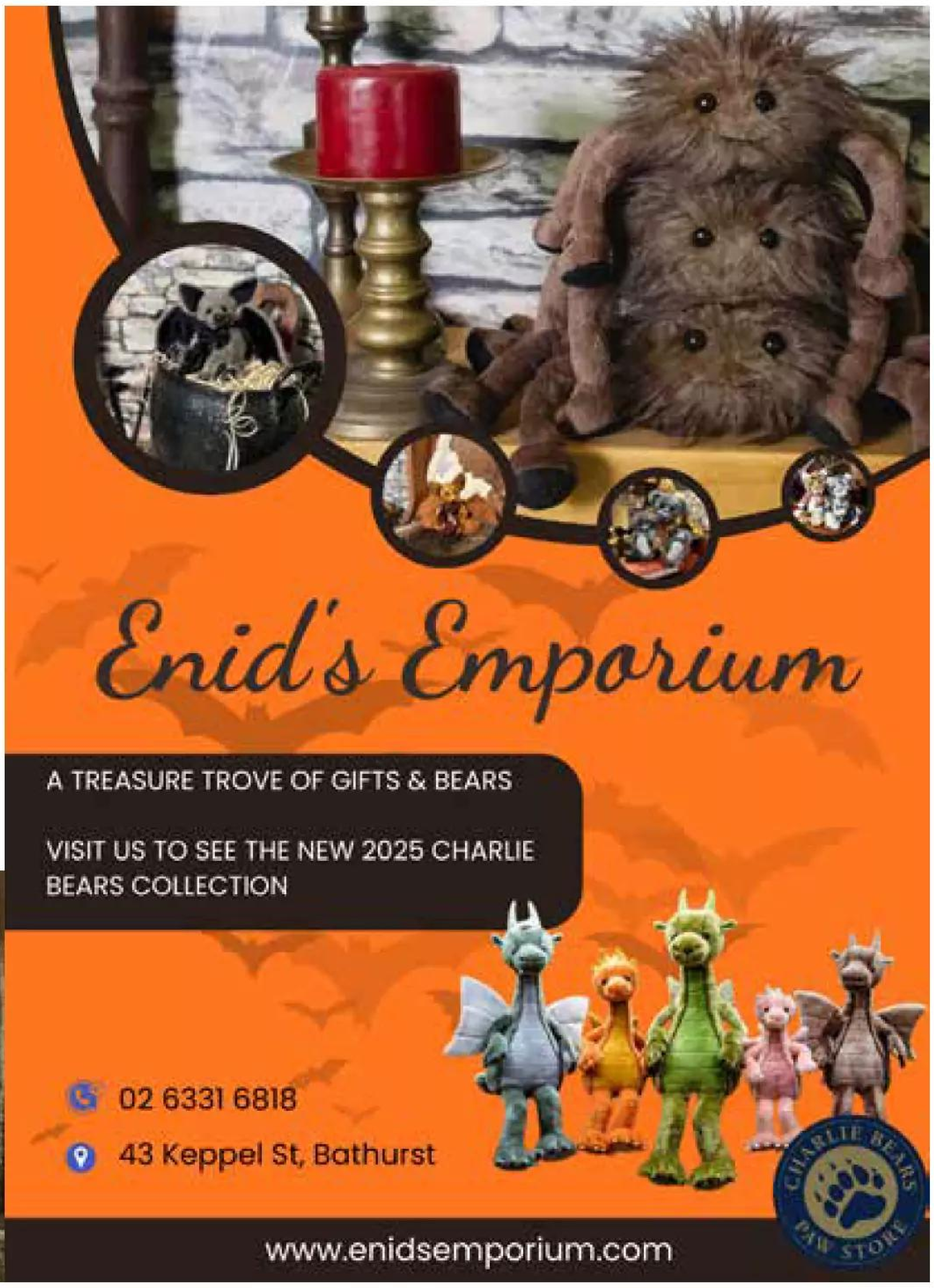
Nestled on Keppel Street, Bathurst, Enid's Emporium is a charming treasure trove of unique giftware, collectible teddy bears, and plush toys. Sisters Tracey and Kim launched the shop seven years ago, filling a gap in the market for quality bears and memorable gifts.

Named in honour of Kim's inspiring mother-in-law, Enid, the Emporium began with Settler, Dean's, Clemens, and Charlie Bears alongside handmade scarves and jewellery.

After two years, they moved to their larger location at 43 Keppel Street and expanded their offerings, becoming a proud Charlie Bears Pawstore with exclusive, limited-edition characters.

The shop features beloved plush brands like Paddington Bear, The Gruffalo, Hello Kitty, and Disney Baby, plus stylish ranges from Lisa Pollock, Smyle earrings, Warmies, Couture Kingdom jewellery and more.

Stocking artisan goods, wooden toys, and kids' games, Enid's Emporium continues to delight visitors with its whimsical finds and the motto: "There's always room for one more bear." Also check out their Charlie Bear Monsterology Series - a magical collection inspired by ancient stories and the wildest corners of the imagination.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Escape to the Escarpments

Dryridge Estate, The Blue Mountains' Best-Kept Secret

Just two hours west of Sydney's bustling cityscape, a world of dramatic natural beauty and boutique winemaking awaits. Tucked away in the breathtaking Megalong Valley—an oasis surrounded by the majestic sandstone escarpments of the Blue Mountains — lies Dryridge Estate, a family-run vineyard that offers an escape for the senses.

Dryridge Estate is more than just a vineyard; it's a testament to the perseverance of cool-climate winemaking.

The unique altitude and microclimate of the Megalong Valley allow Dryridge to produce exceptional, handcrafted wines that reflect their spectacular surroundings. With a passionate focus on quality, their portfolio spans vibrant varietals like the crisp 'Isabelle' Riesling and the elegant 'Jack' Shiraz, alongside Mediterranean-inspired drops such as the 'Theodore' Tempranillo. Even the gorgeous Chablis style 'Eva' Chardonnay is a real hit. Each bottle tells the story of the land, bottled with a sense of place that is distinctly Blue Mountains.

The heart of Dryridge Estate is its iconic Cellar Door. Perched perfectly to maximize the panoramic vistas, a visit here is mandatory for any gourmet traveler. Imagine settling onto the deck with a glass of their signature Rosé, a perfectly curated cheese board or a hearty Ploughman's lunch spread before you, while the Megalong Valley stretches out to the horizon. For those who find a single afternoon isn't enough, Dryridge Estate offers 4.5-star luxury accommodation that transforms a day trip into a rejuvenating retreat.

Whether you opt for the rustic charm of The Homestead or the modern comfort of Sunrise Lodge, you are promised peace, privacy, and an unrivaled view to wake up to. Picture sunrise over the vines, a coffee in hand, with nothing but the sounds of the Australian bush for company.

Dryridge Estate is a journey you need to take. It is a true Blue Mountains gem, waiting to be discovered.

INFO@DRYRIDGE.COM.AU
WWW.DRYRIDGE.COM.AU

DRYRIDGE ESTATE
— MEGALONG VALLEY —

226 ASPINALL ROAD, MEGALONG VALLEY
PHONE: 0403 118 990

CELLAR DOOR - WINE TASTING – CHEESE - CHARCUTERIE – WEDDINGS

BOTTLING THE BLUE

DISCOVER THE BLUE MOUNTAINS GIN COMPANY

The Blue Mountains is renowned for its breathtaking sandstone escarpments, hazy valley mists, and vast eucalypt forests.

Now, there's a new reason to journey up the mountain: the Blue Mountains Gin Co, an artisan distillery that has literally captured the spirit of this World Heritage-listed wilderness and poured it into a bottle.

More than just a producer of exceptional spirits, Blue Mountains Gin Co offers a vibrant destination experience that elevates the classic mountain weekend getaway.

Nestled in the heart of Katoomba, Blue Mountains Gin Co's home is The Factory Bar — a stylish, energetic venue that is quickly becoming the region's premier hub for craft cocktails and local culture.

Forget the quiet cellar door stereotype; The Factory Bar is a dynamic destination. You're invited to sink into their comfortable space and enjoy creative, signature cocktails expertly crafted to reflect the local surrounds. Beyond gin, they proudly serve locally produced spirits, wines, and craft beers.

But the experience doesn't end with a drink. You can check their calendar for lively events, including live music — from jazz and classical concerts to vibrant Western Swing—and engaging art workshops.

It's the perfect atmosphere for socialising or just soaking in the rhythm of the mountain life. To feed your soul, they offer cocktail classes and distillery tours so you can dive deep into the art of distillation.

Plan your visit around their delicious tasting menu, featuring elevated bar fare like delectable Reubens, Rarebits on sourdough, and impressive cheese grazing platters and delicious desserts — perfect for sharing after a long day of hiking or sightseeing.

The Factory Bar is more than just a place to drink; it's a sensory gateway to the mountains, offering warmth, flavour, and fun against a backdrop of ancient Australian wilderness.

photo courtesy of deephillmedia

BLUE MOUNTAINS GIN COMPANY

THE MOUNTAINS IN A BOTTLE

The Factory Bar

The Factory Bar
24 Whitton St, Katoomba

bluemountainsgincompany.com.au

DECODING THE WINE AISLE

Stepping into the wine shop can feel overwhelming, but most bottles fall into four main categories: Red, White, Rosé, and Sparkling. Understanding these basic types is the first step to finding your next favorite glass.

Red wines are made from dark-skinned grapes fermented with the skins, which impart the deep color and rich mouth-drying sensation called tannin. These wines, like full-bodied Cabernet Sauvignon or light-bodied Pinot Noir, often boast flavors of dark fruit, spice, and earthiness, pairing perfectly with hearty meats and aged cheeses.

In contrast, White wines are typically made without the grape skins, resulting in a lighter hue and a refreshing, often tart profile. From the crisp citrus of Sauvignon Blanc to the buttery complexity of an oaked Chardonnay, whites are generally lighter, with aromatic notes of citrus, orchard fruits, or flowers. They are excellent pairings for seafood and poultry. The pink-hued Rosé is a versatile middle ground. Made by allowing red grape skins brief contact with the juice, rosé offers the refreshment of a white wine with subtle red fruit flavors like strawberry and watermelon. It's an ideal choice for warm weather or light meals.

Finally, Sparkling wines, such as Champagne and Prosecco, are defined by their festive bubbles, created by a secondary fermentation. Ranging from bone-dry to sweet, these effervescent delights are perfect for celebrations or as a palate-cleansing aperitif.

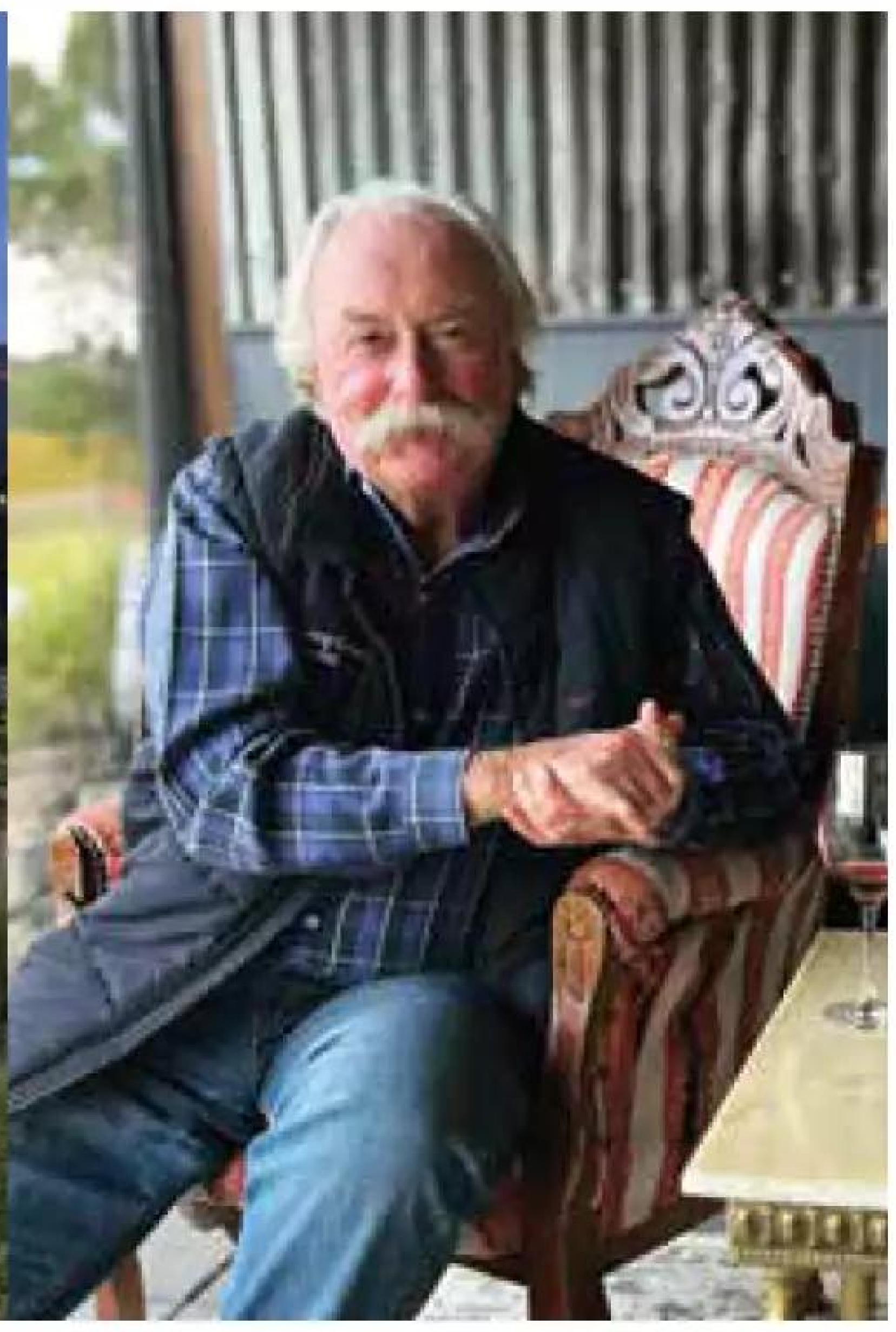
Beyond these, there are also Dessert and Fortified wines (like Port or Sherry) that offer intense sweetness and high alcohol, usually enjoyed after a meal. No matter your preference, there's a wine to suit every palate.

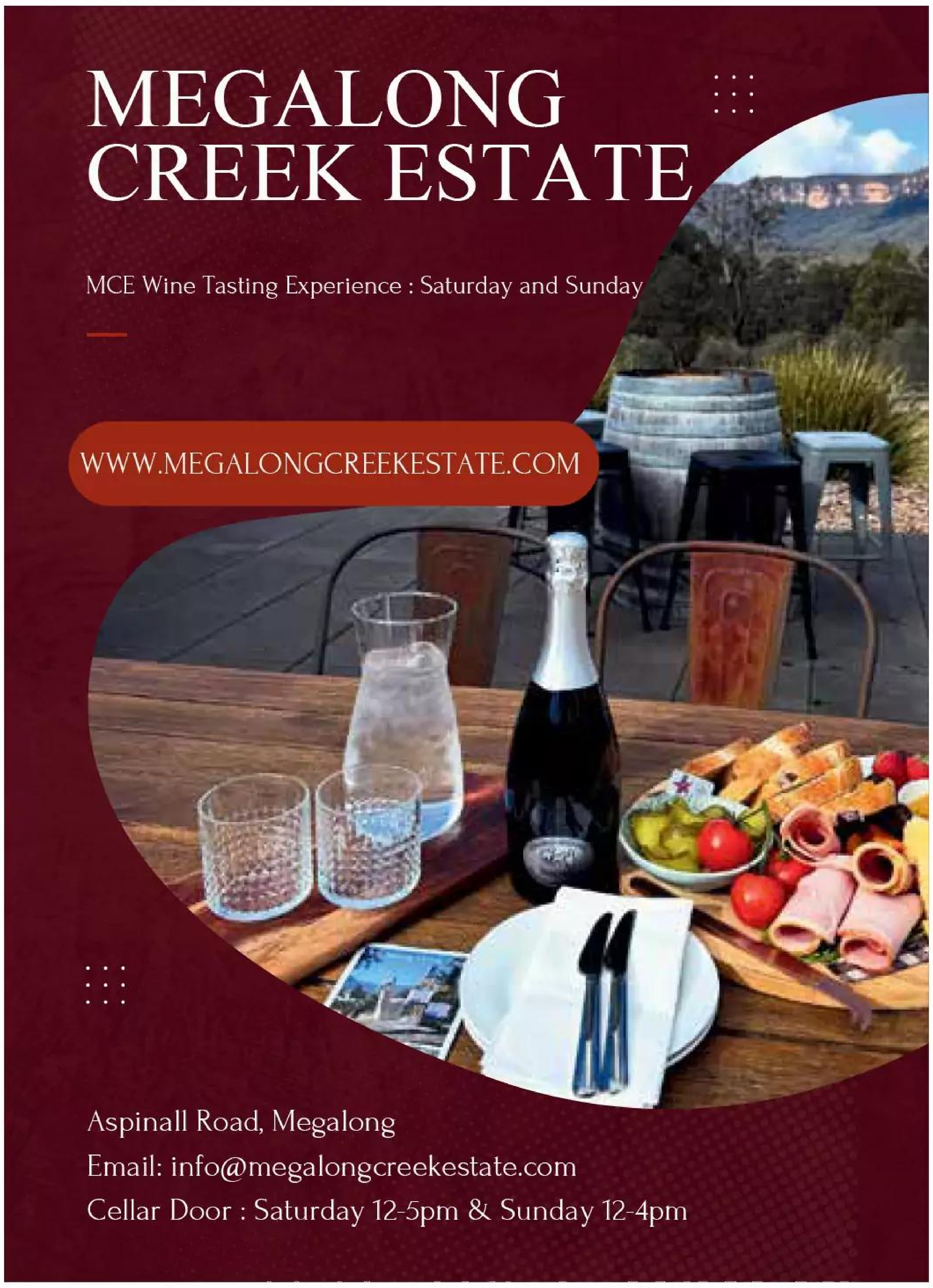
MEGALONG CREEK **ESTATE**

Megalong Creek Estate is a hidden gem of the Blue Mountains. Located in the Megalong Valley, it is home to some spectacular mountain escarpment views and boasts a small but impressive cool-climate wine region.

Their wholesome cellar door hosts tastings in a rustic barn on the family farm. Visit on a weekend to be met by the family and team to enjoy a stunning range of Viognier, Pinot Grigio, Rosé, Pinot Noir, Shiraz and more.

Their wine tells a story of the season they have had, the unique terroir and the genuine love and effort that goes into producing this truly special wine. The Megalong Creek Estate cellar door is open 12pm to 5pm Saturdays and 12pm to 4pm Sundays. Online orders available anytime. Excitingly we have a brand new cellar door opening in 2026! **www.megalongcreekestate.com.**





MEGALONG CREEK ESTATE

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WWW.MEGALONGCREEKESTATE.COM

Aspinall Road, Megalong
Email: info@megalongcreekestate.com
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Harmony in the Hills

OUT WEST PIANO FEST HITS A HIGH NOTE IN BATHURST.

Bathurst is set to host a cultural experience unlike any other when the Out West Piano Fest returns from October 24 to 26, 2025.

Held at the historic Blackdown Farm, the festival blends world-class piano performances with fine dining, heritage architecture, and the natural beauty of regional New South Wales.

Curated by renowned pianist and artistic director Mark Coughlan, the three-day event transforms the 1820s homestead of artist Tim Storrier into a vibrant hub of music and celebration.

Guests will be treated to five themed concerts featuring solo and ensemble works performed on two grand pianos. The program includes dazzling arrangements for four, six, and even eight hands, showcasing the versatility and drama of the piano in full flight.

International artists Jeonghwan Kim, Wynona Wang, and Reuben Tsang join Coughlan in a lineup that promises technical brilliance and emotional depth. Soprano Rachelle Durkin and violinist Harry Bennetts add vocal and string textures to selected performances, enriching the musical palette. Concert themes range from operatic grandeur to Russian romanticism, culminating in a jubilant finale titled “Celebration.”

Beyond the music, guests will enjoy long-table lunches and dinners served in Blackdown’s rose gardens and olive groves.

Menus are inspired by the region’s seasonal produce, offering a culinary journey that complements the artistic program. The festival also invites attendees to explore Blackdown’s art-filled interiors, Georgian gardens, and sweeping landscapes, creating a fully immersive experience.

Located at 90 Eleven Mile Drive, Bathurst, Out West Piano Fest is more than a concert series—it’s a weekend of sensory indulgence, cultural connection, and artistic excellence.

Whether you’re a classical music enthusiast or simply seeking a refined escape, this festival offers a rare opportunity to experience the best of regional NSW in harmony with the arts.

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Plus

HEALTH

83 Gut Instict Care

BEAUTY

84 Skin Deep

WEDDINGS

90 On A Budget

RELATIONSHIPS

91 Opposite Attract?

TRAVEL

94 News

INTERIORS

96 Best of the Best

TECHNOLOGY

98 LG B5

MOTORING

100 Toyota, VW

BOOKS

105 Great Reads

THEATRE

106 Must See

MOVIES

107 New Releases

SOCIAL SCENE

108 Local Highlights

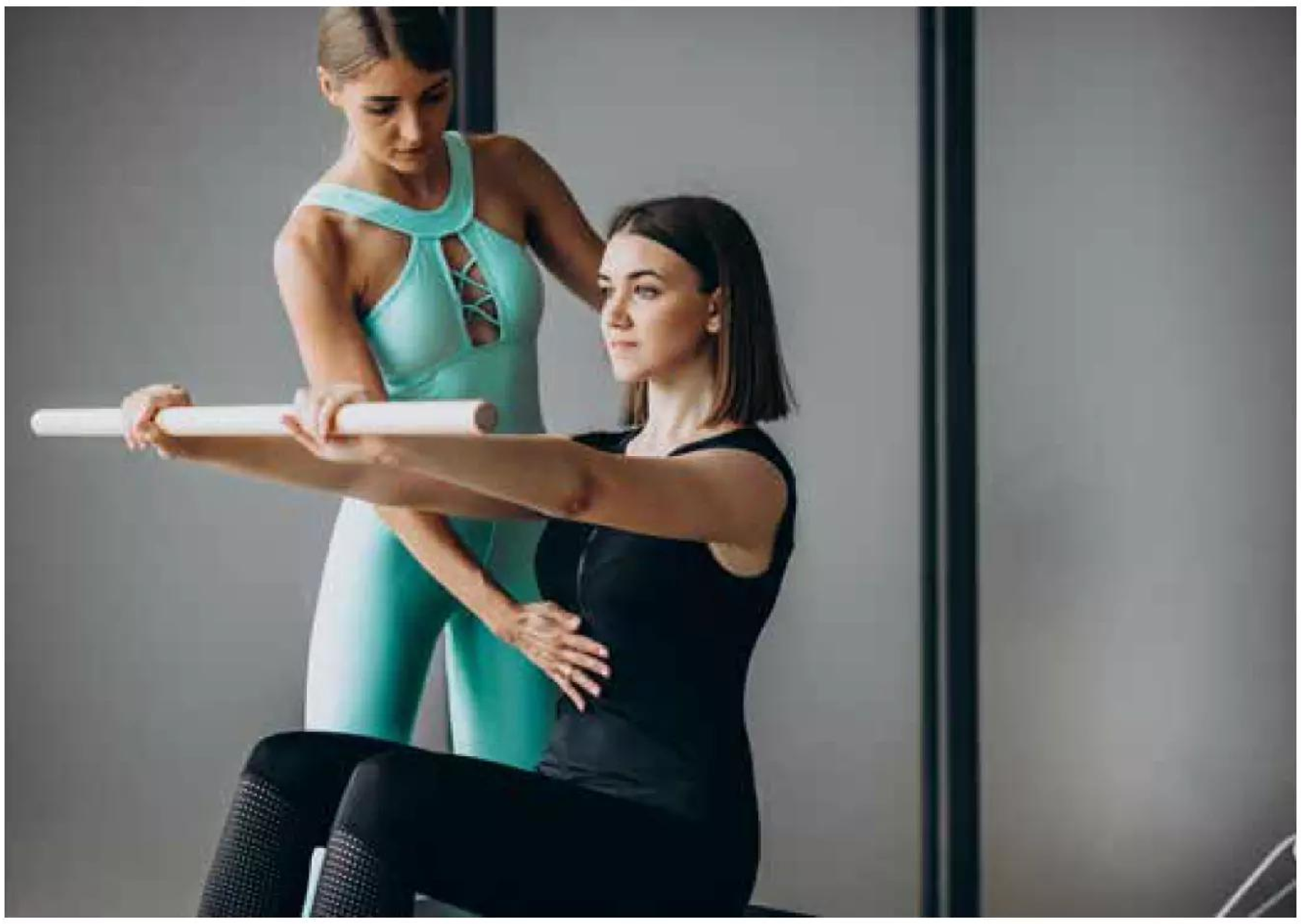
CROSSWORDS

108 Figure It Out

92

95

106



EFFORTLESS
ESCAPE

tucked away in Emu Plains, Elements Float Wellness Centre is a serene retreat designed to help you disconnect from the noise and reconnect with balance.

The centre's signature float therapy is a deeply immersive experience where you effortlessly drift in warm, magnesium-infused water within a sensory-controlled pod or float room. It's a sanctuary of stillness that encourages both physical and mental restoration, often described as a gateway to deep relaxation and clarity.

But the experience doesn't stop at floating. Elements offers a thoughtfully curated range of wellness treatments including full-spectrum infrared sauna sessions, compression therapy for muscle recovery, red-light rejuvenation for skin health and vitality, and mild hyperbaric oxygen therapy to support healing and reduce inflammation.

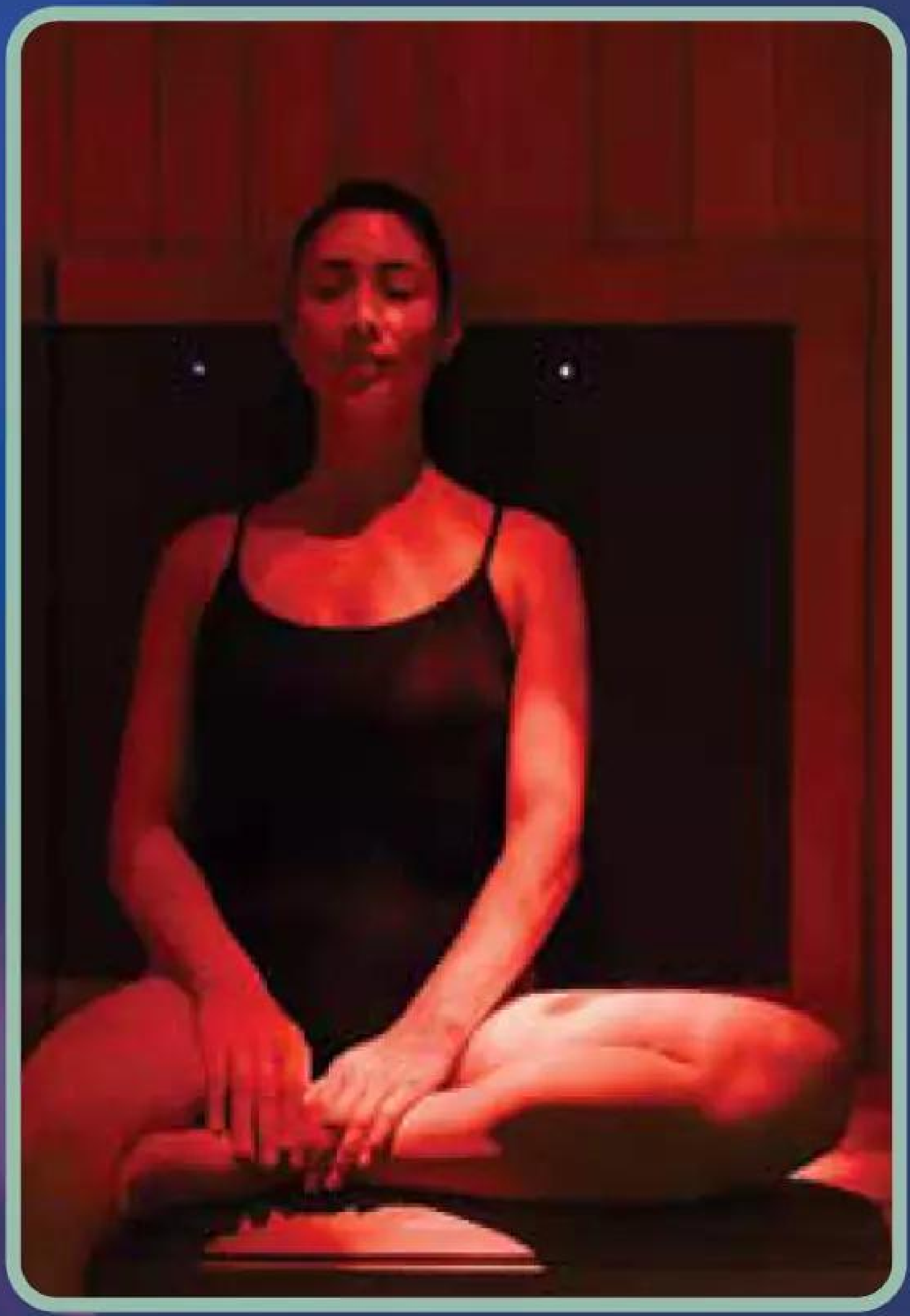
You'll also find movement-based options like Pilates, sunless tanning, and holistic wellness coaching.

The space itself is immaculate and modern, with a calming aesthetic and a clear focus on privacy and comfort. Guests consistently praise the warm, attentive staff and the effortless booking process.

Whether you're looking to reset, recover, or simply breathe deeply, Elements Float delivers a refined and refreshing approach to self-care.

Contact Elements Float Wellness Certre on 02 4783 8383.
Location: U2, 236-238 Great Western Hwy, Emu Plains.
www.elementsfloat.com.au

elements
FLOAT WELLNESS CENTRE



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Gut Instinct

WHY WOMEN SHOULD TRUST THEIR MICROBIOME

BY SUSSAN LONG

It's often said that women should trust their instincts—but what if those instincts are coming from the gut?

Emerging research suggests that the trillions of microbes living in our digestive tract—collectively known as the gut microbiome—play a pivotal role in everything from mood and immunity to hormonal balance and skin health. And for women, the implications are especially profound.

Ever felt "butterflies" before a big meeting or lost your appetite during a stressful week? That's your gut and brain in conversation.

The gut is home to the enteric nervous system, often dubbed the "second brain," which communicates directly with the central nervous system via the vagus nerve. This connection influences emotional regulation, stress response, and even sleep quality.

For women, who are statistically more prone to anxiety and depression, nurturing gut health may offer a natural buffer.

> A diet rich in fibre can help gut level in people.

A balanced microbiome can help regulate cortisol levels and support the production of serotonin—up to 90 per cent of which is made in the gut. The female body undergoes cyclical hormonal shifts that affect digestion, metabolism, and mood.

The gut microbiome plays a key role in metabolising oestrogen, and an imbalance can lead to symptoms such as bloating, fatigue, and PMS. Conditions like endometriosis and PCOS have also been linked to gut dysbiosis, suggesting that microbiome support could be a valuable part of holistic treatment plans.

Modern lifestyles aren't always gut-friendly. Antibiotics, processed foods, chronic stress, and poor sleep can all disrupt microbial diversity.

Even seemingly healthy habits—like excessive sanitisation or restrictive dieting—can throw the microbiome off balance.

Women are particularly vulnerable during life transitions such as pregnancy, menopause, or periods of intense stress, when hormonal fluctuations and lifestyle changes can compound gut issues.

So how can women support their gut health? It starts with food. A diet rich in fibre, fermented foods, and diverse plant-based ingredients feeds beneficial bacteria and promotes microbial diversity.

Think yoghurt, kimchi, sauerkraut, legumes, and leafy greens. ✚

SKINCYCLING

THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE SKINCARE TREND THAT'S CHANGING NIGHT-TIME ROUTINES

BY SUE DREW

If you've ever felt overwhelmed by the sheer number of skincare products lining your bathroom shelf, you're not alone. Enter skin cycling—a minimalist, dermatologist-approved approach that's revolutionising how we care for our skin overnight.

Instead of layering multiple actives every night, skin cycling encourages a strategic rotation of products to maximise results and minimise irritation. Skin cycling is a four-night skincare routine that alternates between exfoliation, retinoid use, and recovery.

The concept was popularised by Dr Whitney Bowe, a dermatologist, and has since gained traction across TikTok, Instagram, and beauty blogs.

Here's the basic breakdown. Night 1 includes exfoliation, using a chemical exfoliant (like AHAs or BHAs) to slough off dead skin cells and prep the skin.

Night 2 involves applying a retinoid to boost cell turnover, reduce fine lines, and improve texture.

> Skin cycling gives your skin time to heal and adapt.

Nights 3 and 4 are the recovery phase, focusing on hydration and barrier repair with moisturisers and serums rich in ceramides, hyaluronic acid, and peptides.

Once done, you repeat the cycle.

The brilliance of skin cycling lies in its simplicity and skin barrier-friendly philosophy. Many people unknowingly overuse potent ingredients, leading to redness, flaking, and sensitivity. By spacing out actives and prioritising recovery, skin cycling allows the skin to reap the benefits of powerful ingredients—without the backlash.

"Skin cycling gives your skin time to heal and adapt," says Dr Emily Tran, a Sydney-based dermatologist. "It's especially helpful for those new to retinoids or dealing with reactive skin."

Skin cycling is suitable for most skin types, including sensitive and acne-prone skin. Beginners can start with gentler formulations—think lactic acid instead of glycolic, or retinaldehyde instead of prescription-strength retinoids. Those with more resilient skin can customise the cycle, adding extra exfoliation nights or stronger actives as needed.

It's also a great entry point for skincare minimalists. Instead of chasing trends or hoarding serums, skin cycling encourages intentionality and consistency.

So whether you're a skincare novice or a seasoned enthusiast, this routine offers a refreshing reset. ✚

CITY **CAVE** PENRITH

A Sanctuary for Mind and Body.

In the heart of Western Sydney, City Cave Penrith offers a tranquil escape from the daily grind.

This wellness centre isn't just another spa — it's a thoughtfully curated space where science meets serenity, designed to help locals reset, recover, and reconnect with themselves.

City Cave's signature service is floatation therapy, which takes place inside an open float pool — also known as a sensory deprivation tank.

These open pools are filled with a warm solution of Epsom salts and water, heated precisely to skin temperature.

The high salt concentration allows you to float effortlessly, creating a sensation of weightlessness. The open float pool is soundproof and pitch-dark, eliminating external stimuli and allowing your mind to enter a deeply meditative state. It's like pressing pause on the world.

This experience is more than just relaxing — it's therapeutic. Float therapy has been shown to reduce stress, ease muscle tension, improve sleep quality, and enhance mental clarity. The magnesium-rich solution also helps detoxify the body and soothe aches and pains.

Beyond floating, City Cave Penrith offers infrared sauna sessions, which use gentle radiant heat to promote detoxification, improve circulation, and relieve joint pain. Their massage therapy options are equally impressive, with a range of treatments tailored to individual needs:

Massage Therapies at City Cave Penrith also include:

Remedial Massage: Targets chronic pain, muscle tension, and injuries. Ideal for those recovering from physical strain or seeking deep tissue relief.

Relaxation Massage: A gentle, calming treatment using Swedish techniques to reduce stress and promote overall wellbeing.

Pregnancy Massage: Specially adapted for expectant mothers, easing discomfort, reducing swelling, and promoting relaxation.

Deep Tissue Massage: Target muscle knots, reduce inflammation, and restore mobility. Perfect for active bodies and sports recovery, this treatment breaks down scar tissue, improves flexibility, and supports long-term muscle health.

The space itself is warm and welcoming, with minimalist design and calming tones that invite you to slow down. With flexible memberships, introductory packs, and gift card options, it's easy to make self-care a regular ritual.

In a world that rarely stops moving, City Cave Penrith is a reminder that healing begins with stillness. Whether you're seeking physical recovery or mental clarity, this wellness haven delivers both — with care, expertise, and a touch of quiet magic.

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NDIS WELCOME

EVERGREEN TURF LADIES DAY

A CELEBRATION OF RACING AND STYLE

As spring racing comes into full swing, Hawkesbury Race Club is preparing to host one of the most anticipated and stylish events of the year - Evergreen Turf Ladies Day, on Saturday 8 November 2025. Known for its unique blend of thrilling racing and dazzling fashion, Ladies Day is a highlight on the Hawkesbury calendar, drawing crowds of racing enthusiasts & fashion lovers eager to soak up the lively atmosphere.

The centrepiece of the day is the $200,000 Listed Evergreen Turf Ladies Day Cup, a feature race that promises top-quality competition. With a rich prize purse and a reputation for showcasing outstanding talent, the Ladies Day Cup never fails to deliver edge-of-your-seat racing moments.

> ‘Racegoers to step out in their finest ensembles’

Whether you’re a seasoned racegoer or a casual spectator, there’s nothing quite like the roar of the crowd as the field charges towards the finish line.

Off the track, Fashions on the Field will once again take centre stage, celebrating elegance, creativity and individuality.

This long-standing tradition invites racegoers to step out in their finest ensembles, from statement headpieces to chic spring outfits. Prizes will be awarded across several coveted categories, including Best Dressed Lady Winner & Runner-Up, Best Millinery Winner, and Best Dressed Local Lady Winner.

Whether competing or admiring from the sidelines, Fashions on the Field adds glamour, colour and a touch of friendly competition to the day.

Adding to the festive atmosphere, live music will play throughout the afternoon, creating the perfect soundtrack for a day spent with friends.

For those seeking an elevated experience, hospitality packages are always in high demand. From premium dining to exclusive trackside spaces, these packages offer the ultimate way to enjoy Ladies Day in comfort and style. With limited availability, early bookings are essential.

With tickets starting from just $20 per person, Evergreen Turf Ladies Day is an accessible and unforgettable day out.

It’s the perfect occasion to gather your friends, dress to impress and immerse yourself in the best of racing, fashion and entertainment.

Evergreen Turf Ladies Day at Hawkesbury Race Club - where sport meets style in spectacular fashion.

For more information or to secure your tickets and hospitality packages, visit hawkesburyraceclub.com.au.

Hawkesbury Race Club

Evergreen TURF

Ladies day

Josh Parr
GT

SATURDAY 8 NOVEMBER

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT • GATES OPEN 11:30AM

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HAWKESBURYRACECLUB.COM.AU

THE PERFECT BLEND OF STYLE & NATURE

Discover Zoe Clare Leura Boutique

As summer arrives, there's no better time to escape to the stunning mountains, where the crisp air, refreshing cool breezes, and ever-changing weather create the perfect backdrop for exploration and relaxation. Leura is not only known for its breathtaking views and picturesque walking trails; it's also home to a treasure trove of beautiful stores waiting to be discovered.

At the heart of Leura's vibrant shopping scene is Zoe Clare Boutique, a must-visit destination for fashion lovers. Our boutique offers a stunning collection of Australian designs infused with a touch of European influence, making it the ideal spot to find that perfect outfit for any occasion.

With the festive season on the horizon, Zoe Clare Boutique has everything you need to look your best for race days, Christmas celebrations, and New Year's parties. Our curated selection features striking event wear that will have you turning heads at every gathering.

But that's not all! We also offer an incredible array of beautiful casual wear that is designed to be worn time and time again, season after season. Explore collections from renowned designers such as Zoe Kratzmann, Once Was, Morrison, and Elka, each piece thoughtfully selected by our dedicated team to ensure you find the perfect fit and style. Whether you're searching for a statement outfit or chic everyday wear, Zoe Clare Boutique is here to provide a personalised shopping experience that you won't forget. Our friendly staff is always on hand to help you discover the latest trends and timeless classics.

So, why not drop in and experience the magic of Zoe Clare? With our incredible outfits and exceptional service, we promise you won't be disappointed. Embrace the beauty of summer in the mountains and elevate your wardrobe with a visit to Zoe Clare Leura Boutique!

Zoe Clare

Timeless, Classic, Elegant Fashion and Accessories for the Modern Woman

WE EMPOWER WOMEN TO LOOK & FEEL GREAT THROUGH OUR RETAIL AND STYLING SERVICES

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BUDGET **BREAKDOWN**

WHERE TO SAVE, WHERE TO SPLURGE ON THAT SPECIAL DAY

BY SUE PATTERSON

Planning a wedding is equal parts excitement and expense. From florals to photography, the costs can quickly spiral—leaving many couples wondering where to invest and where to cut back.

The good news? With a strategic approach, it's possible to create a stunning celebration without blowing the budget.

We spoke to planners, stylists, and newlyweds to uncover the smartest ways to spend—and save—on your big day.

Your wedding lasts a day, but the memories last a lifetime. Investing in a skilled photographer and videographer ensures those moments are captured with clarity, emotion, and artistry.

"Photos are the one thing you'll revisit again and again," says Sydney-based wedding planner Mia Tran. "A talented photographer doesn't just document the day—they tell your story."

Look for professionals with a portfolio that matches your aesthetic, and don't be afraid to ask about packages that include both stills and video. It's worth allocating 10–15% of your total budget here.

> Couples are embracing eco-friendly options.

While Pinterest-worthy tablescapes are tempting, hiring bespoke furniture and elaborate props can drain your budget fast. Instead, focus on a few statement pieces—like a bold arbour or luxe lounge area—and keep the rest simple.

"Minimal styling with strong focal points is more effective than clutter," says stylist Jess Rowe. "Use candles, greenery, and clever lighting to elevate the space without overspending."

Opt for venues that offer in-house furniture or partner with rental companies that bundle items for a discount.

Guests remember two things: how they felt and what they ate. A well-catered meal and generous drinks package go a long way in creating a warm, celebratory atmosphere.

"Food is a love language," says chef and caterer Daniel Ng. "It's worth investing in quality ingredients and service—it sets the tone for the entire event."

Consider interactive food stations, signature cocktails, or shared platters to add flair without excess. Budget around 20–25% for catering, depending on guest count and format.

Printed invitations are beautiful, but they're also one of the easiest areas to trim. Digital invites, QR-coded RSVPs, and minimalist designs can save hundreds without sacrificing style.

"Couples are embracing eco-friendly and tech-savvy options," says designer Priya Desai. "You can still have elegant save-the-dates and menus—just streamline the rest."

If you love the tactile feel of paper, consider printing only the essentials and using digital formats for updates and directions. ✚

COMPATIBILITY MYTH

WHY OPPOSITES DON'T ALWAYS ATTRACT.

BY ANNE WRIGHT

For decades, romantic lore has insisted that opposites attract. The fiery extrovert and the brooding introvert. The free spirit and the planner. The dreamer and the realist. It's a trope that's fuelled countless rom-coms and dating profiles—but does it hold up in real life?

Psychologists and relationship experts say: not quite.

There's no denying the initial spark that can come from meeting someone wildly different. Novelty is exciting.

It challenges our assumptions, exposes us to new perspectives, and can feel like a thrilling escape from routine. But as the honeymoon phase fades, those differences often become friction points.

"Opposites may attract, but they don't always endure," says Dr. Elise Carmody, a Sydney-based relationship therapist. "In the long run, shared values and emotional compatibility are far stronger predictors of relationship success than personality contrast."

It's easy to mistake chemistry for compatibility. That electric charge when you meet someone new can feel like destiny—but it's often driven by subconscious patterns, not long-term alignment.

"People are drawn to what's unfamiliar because it feels exciting," explains Dr. Carmody. "But excitement isn't the same as emotional safety. Compatibility is about how well two people navigate conflict, communicate needs, and support each other's growth."

In fact, studies show that couples with similar communication styles, emotional regulation, and life goals tend to report higher relationship satisfaction. Shared humour, mutual respect, and aligned values often outweigh differences in hobbies or temperament.

That's not to say couples must be carbon copies of each other. Some differences can be complementary—especially when both partners respect and adapt to each other's styles.

Take Emma and Tash, a Melbourne couple who've been together for eight years. Emma is a meticulous planner, while Tash thrives on spontaneity. "We used to clash constantly," Emma admits. "But over time, we learned to compromise. I plan the holidays; she picks the adventures. It works because we value each other's strengths."

The key, experts say, is not the difference itself, but how it's managed. If one partner feels dismissed, overwhelmed, or constantly misunderstood, those differences can erode trust and intimacy.

STOCKHOLM

A NORDIC GEM THAT BLENDS HISTORY, NATURE AND MODERN COOL

BY ANDREW PAPADATOS

If you're dreaming of a European escape that's equal parts stylish, serene and steeped in history, Stockholm should be high on your list.

Sweden's capital is a city of islands—14 to be exact—connected by bridges and ferries, each offering its own flavour of Nordic charm.

Whether you're chasing cobblestone streets, cutting-edge design, or a fika-fuelled afternoon by the water, Stockholm delivers in spades.

Start your journey in Gamla Stan, Stockholm's Old Town, where ochre-hued buildings and winding alleyways transport you back to the 13th century.

It's a pedestrian's paradise, perfect for aimless wandering. Don't miss the Royal Palace, one of Europe's largest, where you can catch the changing of the guard or explore the opulent interiors.

Nearby, Storkyrkan Cathedral and the Nobel Prize Museum offer cultural depth with a side of grandeur.

No visit to Stockholm is complete without embracing fika—the Swedish ritual of coffee and cake, ideally shared with friends.

It's more than a snack; it's a philosophy. Head to Vete-Katten or Café Saturnus for a cinnamon bun the size of your head, paired with a strong Swedish brew. Locals take their fika seriously, and you'll quickly see why.

Stockholm's museums are anything but dry. The Vasa Museum showcases a 17th-century warship that sank on its maiden voyage and

> Stockholm is easy to navigate, with a clean, efficient public transport.

was miraculously salvaged 333 years later.

It's eerie, majestic and utterly fascinating. For something more contemporary, Fotografiska is a cutting-edge photography museum with rotating exhibitions and a rooftop bar boasting panoramic views.

ABBA fans, rejoice—the ABBA Museum is a glittery, interactive tribute to Sweden's most iconic pop group. You can sing in a booth, try on virtual costumes, and even record your own version of "Dancing Queen."

Despite being a capital city, Stockholm is remarkably green. Take a ferry to Djurgården, an island packed with parks, museums and walking trails.

It's ideal for a picnic or a bike ride, and home to Skansen, the world's oldest open-air museum. Here, you'll find traditional Swedish houses, folk dancing, and native animals like moose and lynx.

If you're after something more tranquil, head to the archipelago. With over 30,000 islands, there's no shortage of secluded spots to kayak, hike or simply breathe in the crisp Baltic air.

Stockholm is a design lover's dream. From minimalist interiors to bold fashion statements, the city oozes style. Drop into Svenskt Tenn or Designtorget for homewares that blend form and function. For fashion, explore the boutiques of Södermalm, Stockholm's hipster haven, where vintage shops rub shoulders with edgy Swedish labels.

Swedish cuisine is having a moment, and Stockholm's dining scene reflects that. Try traditional dishes like gravlax, meatballs and pickled herring at Pelikan or Den Gyldene Freden. For something more upscale, book a table at Frantzén, Sweden's first three-Michelin-star restaurant, where Nordic ingredients meet global technique.

Vegetarians and vegans are well catered for too, with plant-based menus popping up across the city. And yes, you'll find plenty of gluten-free options—Swedes are surprisingly ahead of the curve.

Stockholm is easy to navigate, with a clean, efficient public transport system that includes buses, trains and ferries. But the best way to explore is on foot or by bike. The city is compact, safe and scenic, with cycle paths that hug the waterfront and weave through leafy neighbourhoods.

Stockholm is a city that rewards curiosity. It's not just about ticking off sights—it's about soaking in the atmosphere, chatting with locals, and discovering the quiet beauty in everyday moments.

Whether you're a history buff, a design aficionado or just someone who loves a good cinnamon bun, Stockholm will leave you smitten.

So pack your layers, charge your camera, and prepare to fall in love with Sweden's capital—one island, one fika, and one unforgettable view at a time. ✚

BUCKET LIST

DESTINATIONS THAT ARE HOT RIGHT NOW.

CANADA

The Yukon, Canada's wild frontier, offers unforgettable winter escapes through Panorama Cruise & Travel. The Southern Lakes Resort package includes 4 days from $2,496 per person, set beside Tagish Lake for a cosy wilderness retreat. The Aurora Klondike Experience spans 6 days from $3,662 per person, blending frontier history with Northern Lights viewing. The Yukon Winter Heartbeat offers 7 days from $4,225 per person, featuring dog sledding, local cuisine, and Whitehorse exploration. **www.panoramacruiseandtravel.com.au**

SOUTH AMERICA

Treasures of South America by Wendy Wu Tours is a 21-day fully inclusive group tour exploring iconic destinations across Peru, Argentina, and Brazil. Highlights include Machu Picchu, the Sacred Valley, Lake Titicaca, Buenos Aires, Iguazu Falls, and Rio de Janeiro. The itinerary blends cultural immersion, historic sites, and natural wonders, with guided tours, local experiences, and all meals included. Designed for travellers seeking depth and comfort, the tour features 4-star accommodation, international flights, and a maximum group size of 18. Prices from $21,230.
www.wendywutours.com.au

MONGOLIA

Join adventurer Tim Cope on an 18-day trek through Western Mongolia's Kharkhiraa and Turgen mountains, following nomadic migratory routes with camel caravan support. Encounter Khoton and Durvud families, explore ancient Turkic markers, and camp beneath glacier-capped peaks. The journey blends hiking, optional horse riding, cultural immersion, and includes meals, flights, and a donation to Autism Mongolia. With Tim's deep regional insight, this rare experience costs $12,590. www. worldexpeditions.com.
www.worldexpeditions.com

FOOD LOVERS

UTracks' Food Lovers Spanish Camino offers a 15-day culinary pilgrimage through northern Spain, blending scenic walks with immersive food experiences. Travellers follow the historic route from Oviedo to Santiago, enjoying Michelin-starred dining, cooking demos, and wine tastings at Marqués de Riscal Winery. The itinerary includes architectural highlights in León and Santiago, stylish stays in paradors, and deep cultural engagement through local meals and stories. **www.utracks.com**

PHUKET

This Flight Centre holiday package offers a 7-night stay at the 5-star Centara Grand Beach Resort Phuket, located on Karon Beach. Guests enjoy daily breakfast, return airport transfers, and a Phuket Street Food Tour featuring Southern Thai cuisine and nightlife. The deal includes optional return flights and a Dine Around Card with 25% off select restaurants. Highlights include panoramic views from Khao Rang Hill and luxury amenities like a spa, pool, and beachfront access. **www.flightcentre.com.au**

NORTHERN LIGHTS

Viking's "In Search of the Northern Lights" is a 12-night European cruise departing London on 27 January 2026 aboard the Viking Neptune. The itinerary includes stops in Amsterdam, Narvik, Tromsø, and Alta, concluding in Bergen. Guests enjoy a Deluxe Veranda stateroom with all meals, beverages, shore excursions, lectures, and access to Nordic spa facilities. The deal includes a free companion flight from major cities, $200 shipboard credit, unlimited Wi-Fi, and 24-hour room service. **www.flightcentre.com.au**

ROME, TEXAS

Flight Centre offers a Round the World airfare from Melbourne with stops in Dallas Fort Worth, Rome, and Singapore, priced from $2,499 per person in Economy Class. The deal includes baggage and prepaid taxes, and is valid for travel between 27 Oct–3 Dec 2025 or 2 Feb–18 Jun 2026. Travellers can customise their itinerary with expert assistance. **www.flightcentre.com.au**

KENYA

Intrepid has an eight-day Kenya Wildlife Safari offers immersive game drives through Masai Mara, Lake Nakuru, and Lake Naivasha, with chances to spot the Big Five and hundreds of hippos. Travellers stay in camps and a Maasai village, engaging in cultural exchanges, cooking classes, and optional balloon rides. The overland journey blends wildlife encounters with local traditions, guided by experienced hosts. Price from $2260. **www.intrepidtravel.com/au**

ITALY

Embark on an unforgettable 8-day self-guided cycling tour through Italy's sun-drenched Puglia region. For $2290, explore the Ionian and Adriatic coasts, marvel at Alberobello's iconic trulli houses, and savor local delicacies like olive oil and wine. The package includes 7 nights in charming 3-star hotels (with optional upgrades), daily breakfasts, luggage transfers, and a 27-speed touring bike. Ride through ancient towns like Gallipoli and Lecce, with coastal views and quiet roads perfect for moderate-level cyclists. www.utracks.com. **www.flightcentre.com.au**

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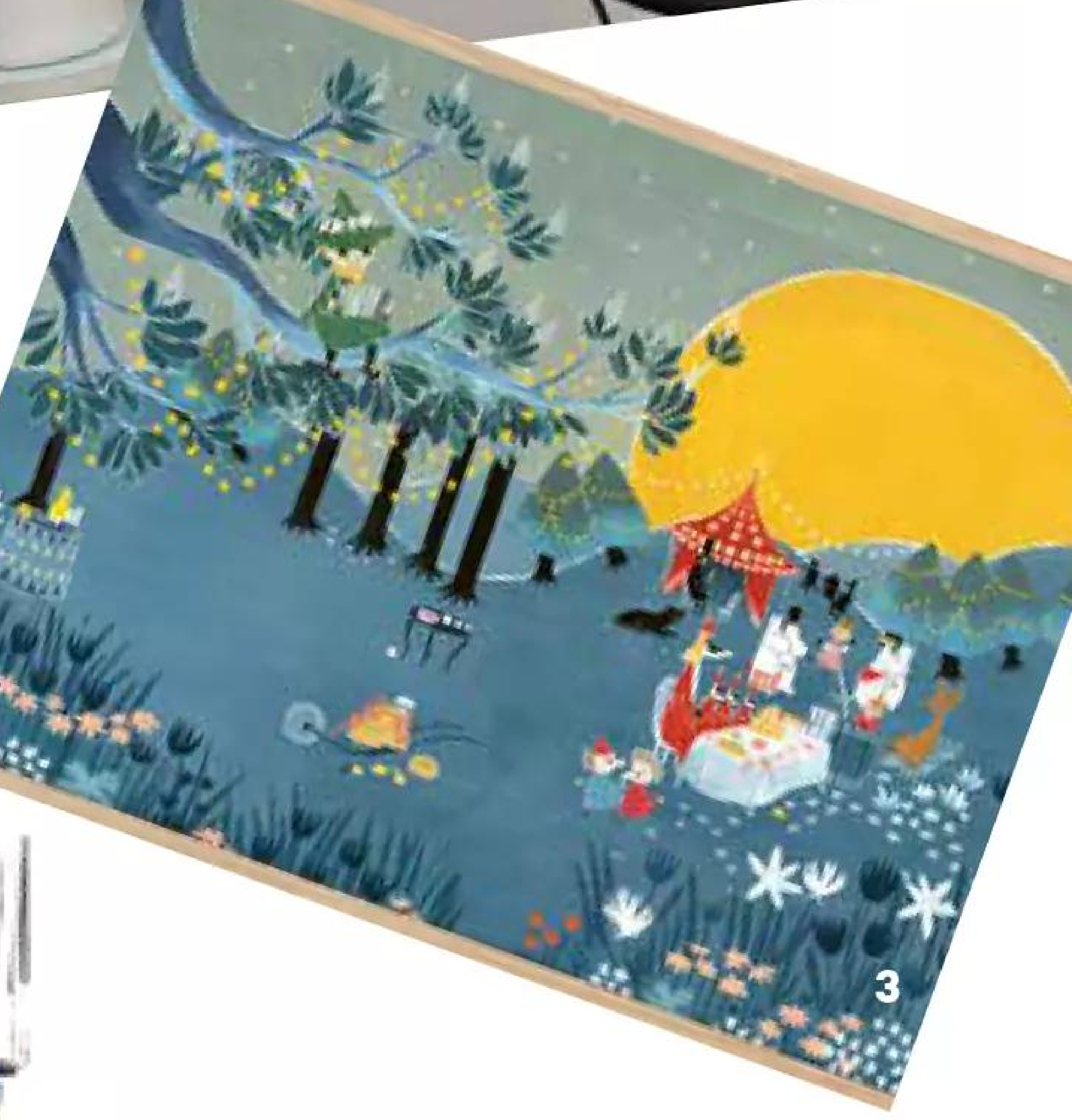
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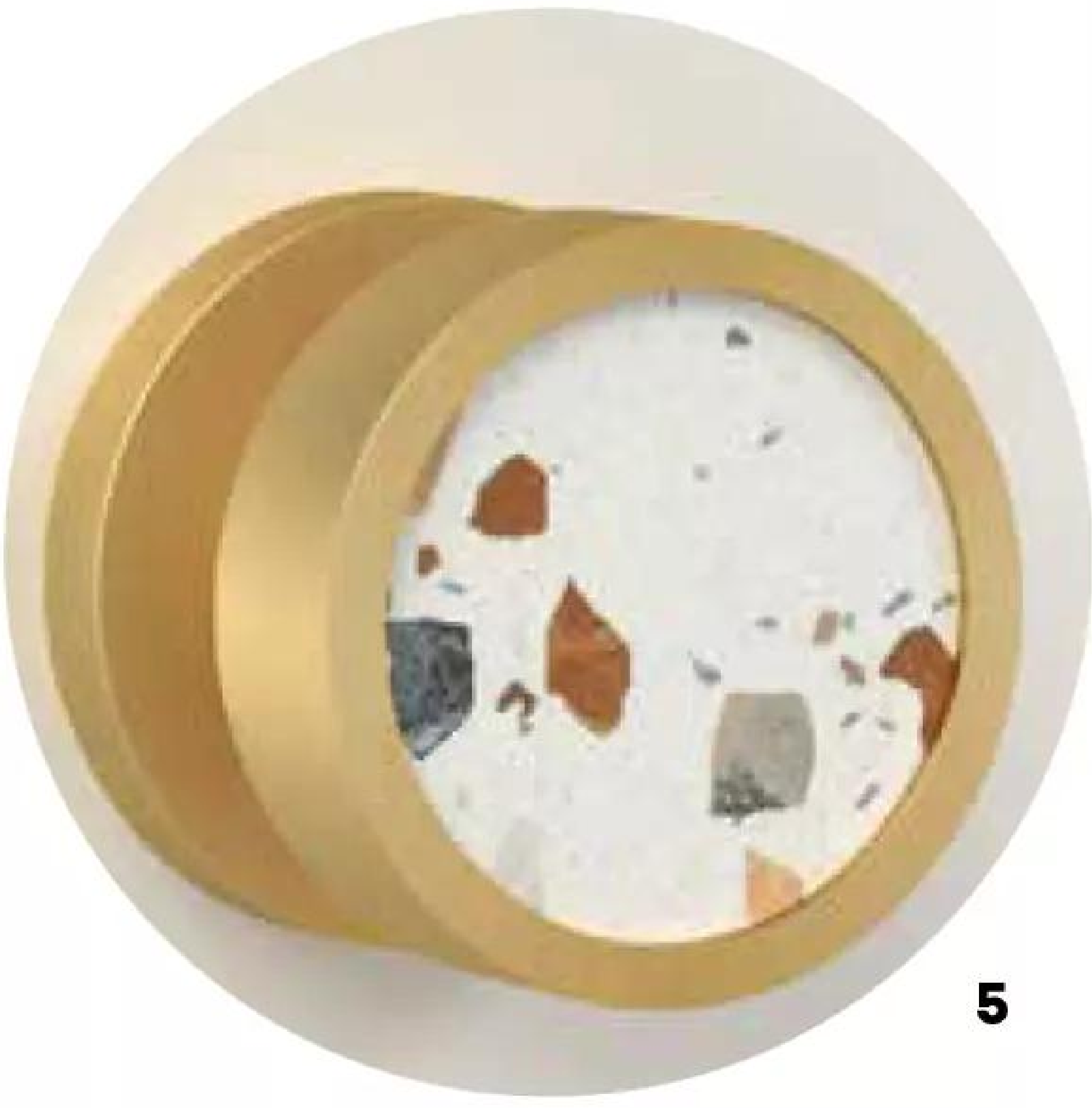
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WINDOW SHOPPING

EXPLORE OUR HANDPICKED SELECTION OF IRRESISTIBLE TREASURES TO ENHANCE YOUR LIFESTYLE.

1.: **The Casa by JJ** partners with UN Women to champion global gender equality. Through curated homeware collections, the brand supports women's empowerment initiatives, blending stylish interiors with meaningful social impact. www.casabyjj.com. **2. Kirsty Black's** latest artworks burst with colour, character, and playful composition. Featuring abstract installations like Otter Wingding and Duck Derby, each piece adds bold personality and movement to contemporary interiors. www.kirstyblackstudio.com**. 3: Poster Store** celebrates Moomin's 80th anniversary with 20 whimsical art prints. Featuring beloved characters and dreamy scenes, these posters bring Nordic charm and storytelling magic to modern interiors. www.posterstore.com **4. Pushka Home's** collection of stair rods are crafted from solid brass and are available in four finishes: Antique Gold, Gold, Silver and Black. They are also available with a knurled or plain end for added detail. www.pushkahome.com **5: Pushka Home's Mortice Door Knobs** offer customisable elegance with brass finishes and tactile materials like terrazzo, oak, and leather. Each piece blends craftsmanship and style for refined interior upgrades. www.pushkahome.com.. **6: Piumati's Murano** glass lighting collection bursts with summer energy, featuring bold chandeliers, pendants, and table lamps in electric tones. Each handcrafted piece blends Italian artistry with contemporary interior elegance. www.piumati.com**. 7: Helen Round's** linen bread bags blend sustainability with charm, featuring hand-printed designs from collections like Honey Bee and Garden. Stylish, reusable, and breathable—perfect for keeping sourdough fresh and artisanal. www.helenround.com. **8: Hélène Elisabeth's Pavés Enchantés** earrings offer feather-light Parisian elegance for festive styling. www.heleneelisabeth.com.. **9: Oficina Inglesa and Jane Churchill** unveil a luxury lighting collection featuring elegant lamps and mirrors. Each piece blends timeless craftsmanship with refined design, perfect for sophisticated interiors and curated editorial spreads. www.oficinainglesa.com

The **LG B5**

AFFORDABLE OLED BRILLIANCE FOR THE EVERDAY VIEWER

BY ANDREW PAPADATOS

In a market overflowing with high-end displays and premium price tags, LG's B5 OLED TV steps in as a compelling alternative—an affordable gateway into OLED brilliance.

Positioned as the entry-level model in LG's 2025 OLED lineup, the B5 doesn't flaunt flagship specs, but rather focuses on delivering the essence of OLED at a more accessible price point. And in that mission, it absolutely delivers.

At the heart of its appeal is the stunning picture quality. OLED panels are renowned for their perfect blacks, infinite contrast, and vivid colour reproduction—and the B5 delivers on all fronts.

Thanks to its self-lit pixel technology, it handles dark scenes in films like John Wick 4 with exceptional depth and nuance, even in ambient lighting conditions. In fact, John Wick 4 serves as a perfect showcase for the B5's capabilities.

The film's moody, shadow-laden cinematography is rendered with striking clarity, and the B5's ability to maintain deep blacks without crushing detail makes every neon-lit alley and candlelit corridor feel immersive and cinematic.

> Delivering OLED brilliance in a refined, accessible package

The TV is powered by the α8 AI Processor 4K Gen2, which uses scene-by-scene upscaling to sharpen visuals and smooth motion. This is particularly effective during fast-paced content such as Formula 1 races or live AFL matches.

For gamers, the B5 supports a native 120Hz refresh rate with a 1ms response time, along with NVIDIA G-Sync and AMD FreeSync support. This means console and casual PC gamers can enjoy responsive, tear-free gameplay—especially useful for PlayStation 5 Pro users looking to game in 4K at 120Hz.

One of the B5's most impressive technical feats is its RGB colour accuracy. Independently tested to deliver 100% colour volume in the DCI-P3 colour space with a D65 white point, the B5 achieves colour consistency levels greater than 99% up to 500 lux. This means colours appear not only vibrant but also true to life, whether you're watching a sun-drenched beach scene or a dimly lit drama. The result is a display that doesn't just dazzle—it respects the filmmaker's intent.

Another strong point is the inclusion of Dolby Vision and Dolby Atmos. These formats significantly boost immersion, with Dolby Vision enhancing HDR visuals and Dolby Atmos deepening the audio experience.

The TV's smart features are also impressive for its class. Running on the webOS 25 platform, it offers a smooth interface with fast access to streaming services like Netflix, Disney+, and Apple TV+. Voice control is integrated via LG ThinQ, and it also supports Apple AirPlay 2, screen casting, and even Microsoft Copilot functionality.

However, the B5 isn't without trade-offs. It doesn't reach the same peak brightness as the more premium C5 or G5 models in LG's range.

This may slightly compromise HDR performance in particularly bright rooms. Though it handles 4K/120Hz well, it lacks support for higher refresh rates such as 144Hz or 165Hz—limits that might turn away more competitive PC gamers. In terms of design, the B5 plays it safe.

While serviceable, its dual-leg stand and plastic chassis don't carry the ultra-premium appeal of more expensive models.

Sound output is another mild shortcoming. Even with Dolby Atmos and AI Sound Pro, the built-in 20W speaker system struggles to create room-filling sound on its own, making a soundbar a recommended addition for full cinematic enjoyment.

Technically speaking, the B5 features a 4K flat OLED display and is available in a broad range of sizes from 48 to 83 inches. It includes HDMI 2.1 ports, supports Wi-Fi 6 and Bluetooth, and carries a 5-star energy rating in Australia. Its design may be understated, but its performance in real-world use is anything but.

The LG B5 is best suited to buyers looking for high picture quality without the flagship price. It's an excellent choice for movie enthusiasts, sports fans seeking smooth motion clarity, casual gamers wanting a responsive display, and households that stream most of their content. It provides an exceptional balance between quality and cost, making OLED technology far more attainable.

However, buyers looking for peak HDR brightness, audiophile-grade sound, or bleeding-edge gaming features might find better options higher up LG's lineup. For everyone else (which is about 90 pre cent of the population), the B5 represents remarkable value—delivering OLED brilliance in a refined, accessible package that punches well above its price tag. ✚

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Feature Details

Display Type	4K OLED (Flat)
Sizes Available	48", 55", 65", 77", 83"
Processor	α8 AI Processor 4K Gen2
Refresh Rate	120Hz Native
HDR Support	Dolby Vision, HDR10, HLG
Gaming Feature	G-Sync, FreeSync, 1ms response time
Audio	20W output, Dolby Atmos, AI Sound Pro
Smart OS	webOS 25 with ThinQ, Apple AirPlay 2, Cast
Connectivity	HDMI 2.1, Wi-Fi 6, Bluetooth
Energy Rating	5-Star

TOYOTA RAV4

Toyota has announced the arrival of its all-new sixth-generation RAV4, set to launch in the first half of 2026.

The updated SUV introduces a broader range of variants, including Toyota Australia's first-ever plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV), marking a significant step in the brand's electrification strategy.

The new RAV4 GR Sport will headline the lineup, boasting a powerful AWD PHEV system that delivers a combined output of 227kW — making it the most powerful RAV4 to date.

A second PHEV option will be available in the mid-range XSE grade, offering both AWD and 2WD configurations.

All hybrid grades employ a fifth-generation hybrid system with a 2.5-litre petrol engine and either front or front and rear electric motors, and produce a combined maximum power output of 143kW regardless of 2WD or AWD, while providing typically smooth operation.

All RAV4 grades will feature a comprehensive standard specification, safety equipment and Toyota Connected Services functionality, even on the base GX which will include 17-inch dark grey alloy wheels, LED auto-levelling headlamps, a 10.5-inch multimedia system with wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster with smartphone integration, five USB-C ports and dual-zone climate control, among other features.

Safety and connectivity also receive a major upgrade, with the latest Toyota Safety Sense suite and a new multimedia system powered by the Arene platform. Features include a panoramic view monitor, advanced driver assistance, and over-the-air updates.

ON THE **ROAD** FOR ALL THE LATEST MOTORING NEWS

VOLKSWAGEN TAYRON

Volkswagen has launched its all-new Tayron SUV range for those seeking a slightly larger SUV.

Positioned between the Tiguan and Touareg, the Tayron is available in four variants: the seven-seat 110TSI Life, five-seat 150TSI Life, 150TSI Elegance, and the high-performance 195TSI R-Line.

Starting at $48,290, the 110TSI Life delivers standout value with a 12.9-inch infotainment system, wireless charging, keyless access, and Volkswagen's Travel Assist suite.

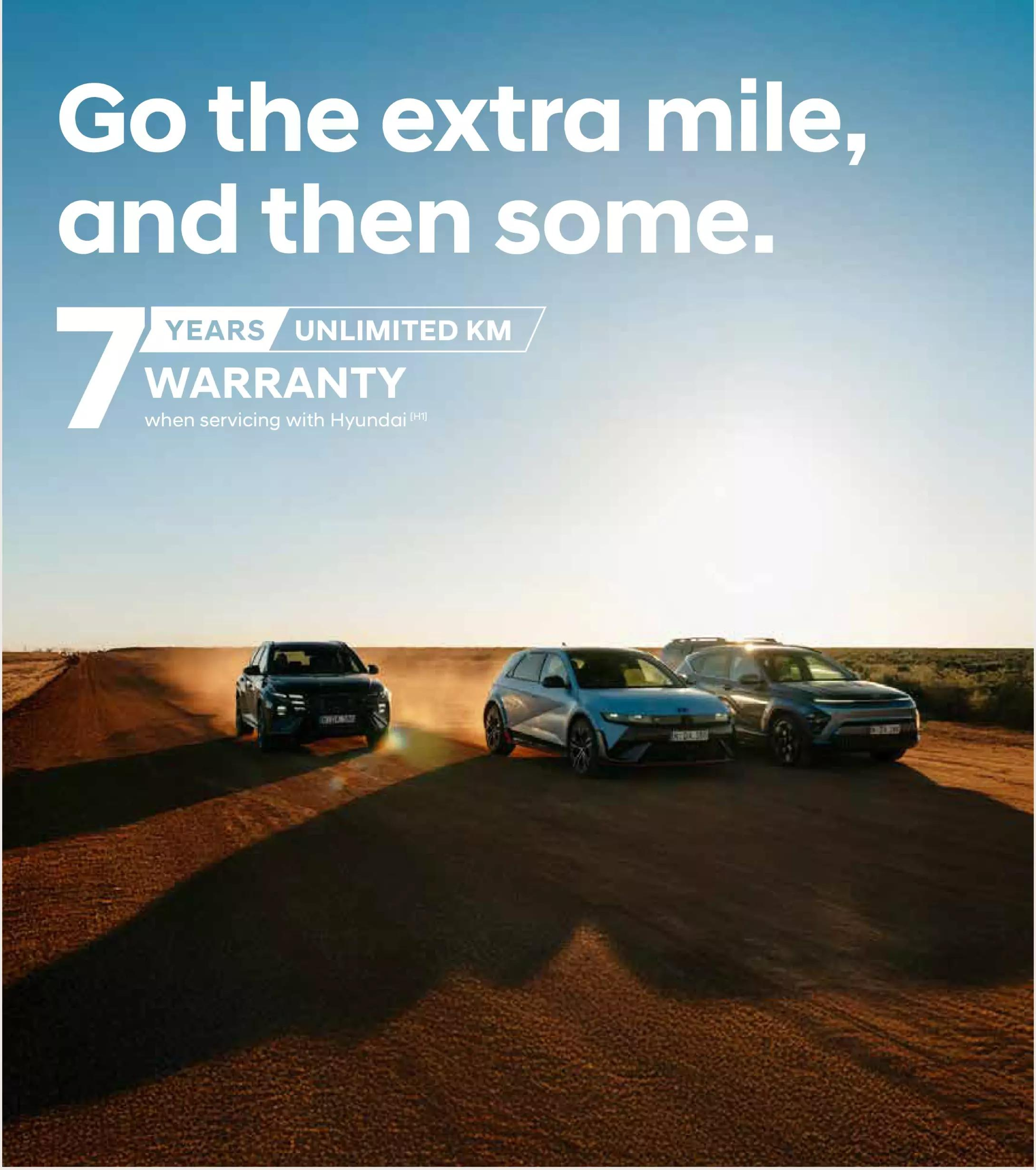
The 150TSI Life ($53,990) adds all-wheel drive, an 885-litre boot, and Offroad driving mode, ideal for active families.

The 150TSI Elegance ($59,490) introduces ventilated leather seats with massage function, chrome detailing, and optional upgrades like a panoramic sunroof and Harman Kardon audio.

At the top, the 195TSI R-Line ($73,490) delivers 195kW of turbocharged power, Golf GTI-inspired dynamics, and premium tech including HD Matrix LED headlights and a head-up display.

The 2.0-litre turbocharged engine with 4MOTION all-wheel drive guarantees another level of performance, dispatching 0-100km/h in 6.1 seconds.

It builds on 150TSI Elegance equipment levels with inclusions like purposeful R-Line styling enhancements, unique 20-inch 'Leeds' alloy wheels, HD Matrix LED headlights, premium LED tail-lights with 3D animation, Harman Kardon premium audio, 15" Discover Pro Max navigation, a head-up display, progressive steering, plus an optional panoramic sunroof for $2,100.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HYUNDAI

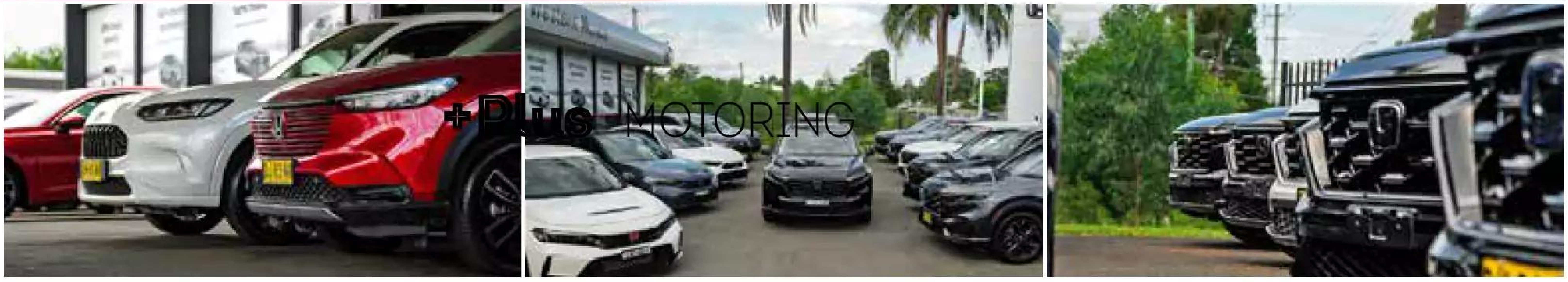
[H1] Available for new Hyundai passenger vehicles first registered from 1 June 2025 and when all scheduled services are completed at an authorised Hyundai dealer.

In addition to the 5 Year Standard New Car Warranty, Hyundai provides an extended warranty for up to a further 2 years, when all servicing is with Hyundai. Enjoy even more confidence on the road with Hyundai's Extended New Car Warranty—providing warranty coverage for up to 84 months (7 years) from the date of first registration, with unlimited kilometres. Subject to the terms, conditions and exclusions outlined in our warranty policy. Excludes vehicles used for 'commercial application'^.

To qualify and remain eligible for the Extended New Car Warranty, both of the following conditions must be met throughout the entire warranty period:

- All scheduled services must be completed at an authorised Hyundai dealer.
- Each scheduled service must be in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended schedule at the specified servicing intervals for the duration of the Extended New Car Warranty. (See the full service schedule in your vehicle's service warranty passport)

If **either condition is not met**, the vehicle will no longer be eligible for the Extended New Car Warranty from the date the requirement was not fulfilled.



+Plus MOTORING

DRIVEN BY TRUST

GREAT WESTERN HONDA KINGSWOOD POWERS LOCAL ROADS.

BY JOHN DREW

In the heart of Kingswood, Great Western Honda isn't just a car dealership — it's a trusted community partner delivering joy, reliability, and exceptional service to every driver who walks through its doors.

Whether you're upgrading your ride, exploring hybrid options, or simply seeking peace of mind on the road, this local Honda Centre offers more than just vehicles — it offers a driving experience worth celebrating.

Why Choose Great Western Honda? Unmatched reliability. Honda has long been synonymous with strength, longevity, and innovation.

Great Western Honda upholds these values with every vehicle sold — whether it's a sleek Civic, a family-ready CR-V, or a fuel-efficient hybrid. Each model is backed by Honda's legacy of engineering excellence and long-term value.

They also offer tailored finance and test drive options. Buying a car should be exciting, not exhausting. Great Western Honda simplifies the process with flexible finance solutions, easy online tools to build and price your dream car, and test drives that fit your schedule.

Looking for a pre-owned quality car without the new-car price tag? Their pre-owned selection is rigorously inspected and backed by Honda's assurance, giving you confidence with every kilometre.

Meanwhile, their customer-first philosophy will help you when you need it most. From your first enquiry to post-purchase support, their team of Honda experts is committed to making every interaction joyful and stress-free.

They provide certified maintenance, repairs, and genuine Honda parts — all backed by the expertise needed to uphold Honda's reputation for reliability and keep your vehicle in top condition for every kilometre.

Great Western Honda, which won the Local Business Awards for New and Used Motor Vehicles, is proud to support the Penrith region both on and off the road. From sponsoring events to supporting grassroots organisations, the team is deeply invested in making Kingswood a better place to live and drive. "I didn't expect a car dealership to care so much about the community. They're not just selling cars — they're part of the neighbourhood." said Melissa T from Glenmore Park.

Whether you're a first-time buyer, a loyal Honda driver, or simply curious, Great Western Honda Kingswood invites you to experience the joy of driving with a team that puts people first. Stop by, take a test drive, and see why so many locals are choosing Great Western Honda — not just for the car, but for the care.

Great Western Honda
95 Great Western Hwy, Kingswood. Ph: 02 8805 9500
www.honda.com.au/honda-centre/great-western-honda

It's not a hybrid. It's a Honda hybrid.

Honda's intelligent hybrid system.

"At Great Western Honda, we're proud to be your local Honda dealer in Western Sydney, committed to delivering not only exceptional vehicles but also the highest level of customer care. Our team is dedicated to providing a friendly, transparent, and personalised experience every time you visit - from sales to servicing. Being part of the local community means we understand what our customers value most: reliability, honesty, and a dealership you can trust."

Mark Allen - Sales Manager

95 Great Western Highway, Kingswood 2747

Great Western HONDA

MERCEDES BENZ GLC 350E

Mercedes-Benz has unveiled the GLC 350e 4MATIC SUV, a plug-in hybrid addition to its popular mid-size range.

With a certified electric driving range of 132 km, the new model is designed to handle most daily commutes without engaging its petrol engine.

Combining a four-cylinder engine with an electric motor, the GLC 350 e delivers up to 230kW and 550Nm of torque, accelerating from 0–100 km/h in just 6.7 seconds.

Drivers can select from electric, battery level, and hybrid modes via a selection switch, while a haptic accelerator pedal aids smooth transitions between power sources.

Standard features include a panoramic sunroof, 19-inch alloy wheels, heated memory seats, and a head-up display. Connectivity is enhanced with Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, and wireless charging. Charging options range from 11kW AC to 55kW DC, with two cables included Optional packages allow further customisation, including the Sport Package with AMG styling, the Night Package with black accents, and the Plus Package featuring advanced tech and safety systems.

SUZUKI FRONX

Suzuki has officially unveiled its all-new Fronx Hybrid, a compact SUV poised to disrupt the light SUV category with a drive-away price of just $29,990. Launched last month, the Fronx Hybrid is a small to medium SUV that is spacious enough for five people.

The Fronx promises fuel efficiency without sacrificing performance. It's the most comprehensively equipped Suzuki ever released in Australia, boasting premium features like a Heads-Up Display, 360-degree camera, wireless charging, and heated front seats—all typically reserved for higher-end vehicles.

Key features include a 1.5 litre engine with a six-speed automatic, 16" polished alloys, heads-up display, a 360-degree view camera, 9-inch audio infotainment unit, wireless Apple CarPlay & Android Auto and a wireless charger.

The compact SUV arrives with a full suite of advanced driver assistance systems, positioning it as one of the most comprehensively equipped vehicles in its class.

At the heart of its safety offering is Suzuki's Dual Sensor Brake Support II (DSBS-II), which helps

Great reads

BOOKS THAT YOU CAN ENJOY.

THE MIDNIGHT ESTATE
KELLY RIMMER
SUZANNE DO
THE GOLDEN SISTER
LEE CHILD
THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE BESTSELLER
REACHER
THE STORIES BEHIND THE STORIES
STILLWATER
TANYA SCOTT
A VIOLENT PAST HE'D RATHER FORGET
SECRETS THAT COULD GET HIM KILLED
PLANTING for NATIVE BIRDS, BEES and BUTTERFLIES
Jaclyn Crupi

THE MIDNIGHT ESTATE

By Kelly Rimmer

The Midnight Estate by Kelly Rimmer is a gothic family saga set in the haunting Wurimbirra estate. Fiona Winslow, seeking solace after a turbulent year, uncovers long-buried family secrets while restoring the mansion. A mysterious book, also titled The Midnight Estate, eerily mirrors her life, blurring the line between fiction and reality. As Fiona delves deeper, she confronts betrayal, love, and generational trauma. Rimmer masterfully weaves a book-within-a-book narrative, blending emotional depth, mystery, and atmospheric storytelling into a compelling tale of resilience and discovery.

THE GOLDEN SISTER

By Suzanne Do

The Golden Sister by Suzanne Do is a poignant debut novel set in the coastal village of Swanning. After the sudden death of her twin sister Honey, Lili Berry is consumed by grief and determined to uncover the truth. Her search leads her to Pete, a man haunted by the disappearance of his own child. Together, they unravel a web of secrets that binds their pasts. Blending heartbreak and humour, the story explores grief, guilt, and the healing power of unexpected friendships. With a distinctly Australian setting, it's a soulful tale of family, love, and resilience.

REACHER: THE STORIES BEHIND THE STORIES

By Lee Child

Reacher: The Stories Behind The Stories is Lee Child's first autobiographical collection, offering 24 personal reflections on his life and writing journey. From pencilling his debut Killing Floor to navigating the digital age and witnessing his novels adapted for film, Child shares candid insights into the psychological and physical contexts behind each book. The collection reveals his deep gratitude for readers and explores pivotal moments—from 9/11 to fan encounters—that shaped his storytelling. More than a behind-the-scenes look at the Reacher series, it's the story of a man who turned adversity into literary triumph.

STILLWATER

By Tanya Scott

In this explosive Australian debut, Luke Harris returns to Melbourne seeking peace after escaping a violent past. But tranquility proves elusive when he's drawn back into the city's criminal underworld. His former boss, Gus Alberici, resurfaces with threats, demanding answers about a missing bag of cash and Luke's vanished father. As Luke navigates old loyalties and new dangers—including a suspicious father-in-law—he must outwit Gus to protect those he loves. Set against a gritty Melbourne backdrop, Stillwater blends suspense, heart, and psychological depth. Perfect for fans of Jane Harper and Lee Child, it's a tense, character-driven thriller about redemption and survival.

PLANTING FOR NATIVE BIRDS, BEES AND BUTTERFLIES

By Jaclyn Crupi

By Jaclyn Crupiordinary murder suspect. She's a famous true

On stage

THEATRE & MUSIC

GREASE

At the heart of the story is the romance between hot-rodding gangster Danny Zuko and the sweet new girl in town, Sandy Dumbrowski. They had a secret romance in summer, but now back in the context of school, peer-pressure and cliques make their love a bit more complicated. Can Danny maintain his cool dude status and still make demure Sandy his girl?

Venue: Orange Civic Theatre
Date: Oct 17-25

ROMEO & JULIET

After a chance meeting, an intense but forbidden love is ignited between two young lovers, Romeo and Juliet. And despite the unending, violent feud between their families, they will risk everything to be together. This raw portrayal of Romeo & Juliet will envelop you in the passion, the intensity, and the heartbreak of Shakespeare's most evocative tragedy.**Venue: Orange Civic Theatre**
Date: Nov 13

ABBALANCHE

Get ready for a sensational night of music, nostalgia, and pure fun as multi-award winning Abbalanche – the Australian Abba Tribute Show, takes the stage to deliver an electrifying tribute to the iconic Swedish pop group, ABBA. Abbalanche brings the legendary hits and unforgettable charm of ABBA to life like never before.

Venue: Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre
Date: Oct 18

LES MISÉRABLES

In 2019, Cameron Mackintosh produced a spectacular sell-out staged concert version at the Gielgud Theatre in London's West End, featuring an all-star cast including Michael Ball, Alfie Boe, Carrie Hope Fletcher, Matt Lucas, and John Owen Jones. Now, cinema audiences can experience a unique encore of this incredible show to celebrate Les Misérables 40th Anniversary. Featuring a cast and orchestra of over 65 and including the songs I Dreamed A Dream, Bring Him Home, One Day More, and On My Own, this sensational staged concert is not to be missed..

Venue: Orange Civic Theatre
Date: Aug 27

SPINAL TAP II THE END CONTINUES
The band reunite after a 15-year break for one final concert.

Film preview

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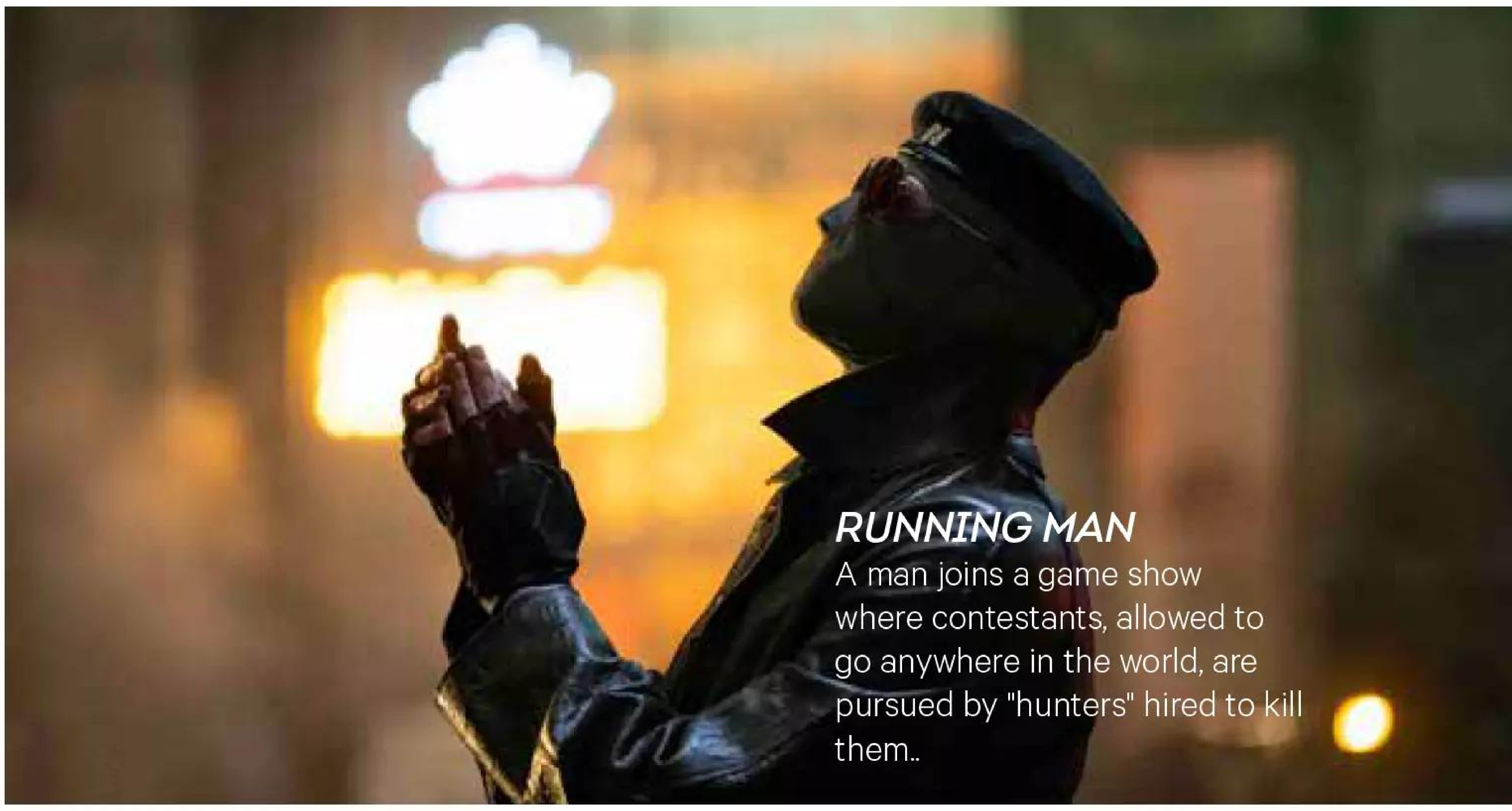
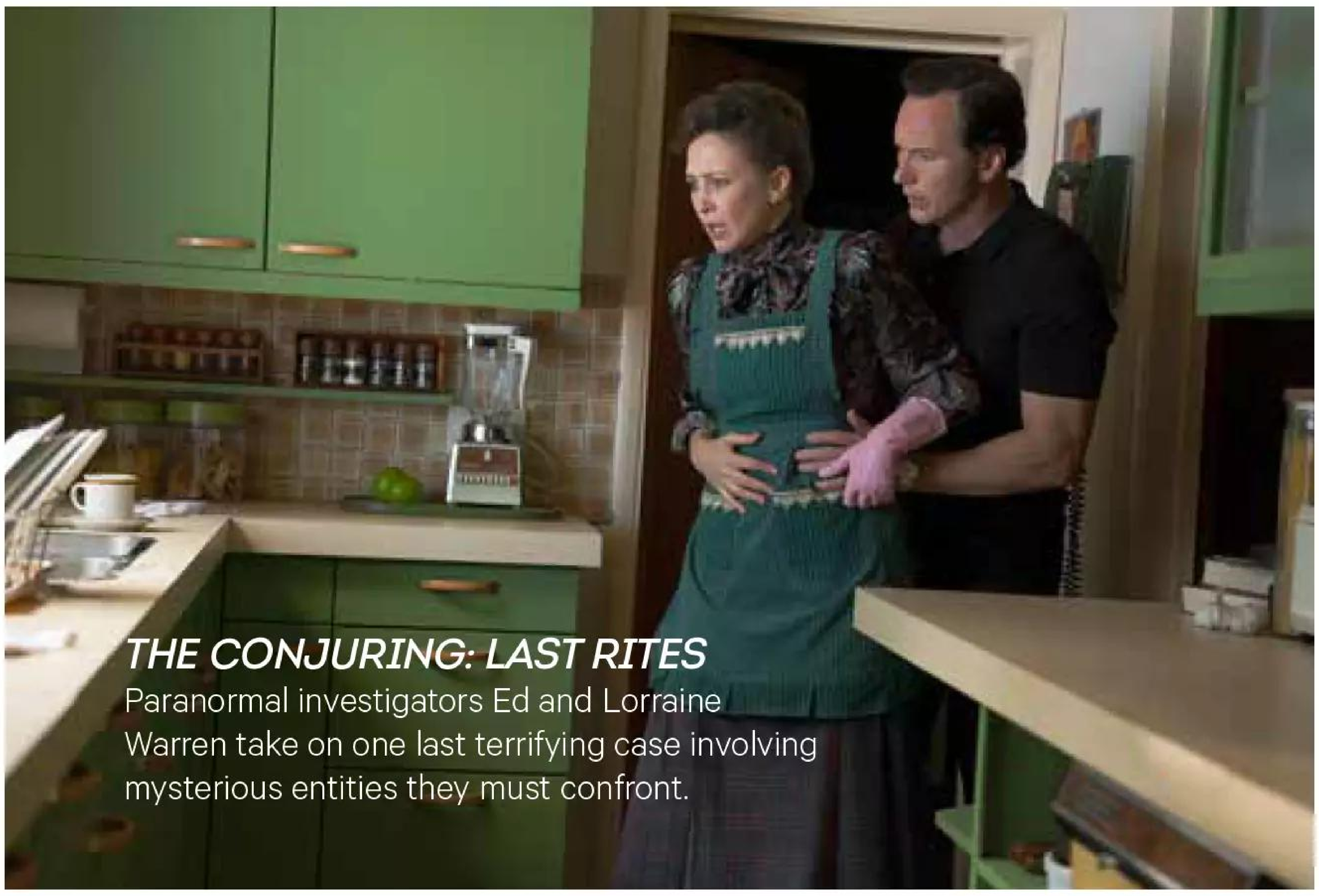
ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER
When their evil enemy resurfaces after 16 years, a group of ex-revolutionaries reunite to rescue one of their own's daughter...



RUNNING MAN
A man joins a game show where contestants, allowed to go anywhere in the world, are pursued by "hunters" hired to kill them..



THE CONJURING: LAST RITES
Paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren take on one last terrifying case involving mysterious entities they must confront.

GORILLA NUT

NAKED GUN
Only one man has the particular set of skills - to lead Police Squad and save the world..

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BRICK IN THE WALL

How many five letter words can you find reading down the face of our wall? The letters of each word can only read downwards on touching bricks, taking one only from each line.

B G B
R L R L
O E I
O A E N
M T D

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ANAGRAM SQUARE

Rearrange the letters in each row to form a word. Write your answers into the blank grid. The first letter from each word, reading down, will spell the mystery keyword.

1	T	E	M	L	A
2	L	A	U	W	F
3	S	O	A	C	H
4	D	H	A	I	P
5	H	E	W	O	L

1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

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ANAGRAM THEMED

Unscramble the letters of the phrases to make five words relating to the theme, each starting with the given letter. The letters in the shaded squares will spell out another word relating to the theme. This is the mystery keyword.

PIZZA TOPPINGS

A motto	T					🟩			
Pen pal pie	P		🟩						
So vile	O		🟩						
Has no vice	A				🟩				
Go on ear	O					🟩			

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CODE CRACKER

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Each number represents a different letter of the alphabet. Work out which number stands for which letter to complete the crossword. We've given you two letters to start. All words are from a dictionary and no proper nouns are used. All letters of the alphabet are not always used. When you have cracked the code fill in the answer in the boxes below.

CLUES

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
G											L														

2	14	9	3	18	14	■	4	18	20	20	10	21
14	■	16	■	2	■	1	■	3	■	18	■	20
16	17	22	2	10	■	18	■	10	12	16	22	17
14	3	3	■	21	15	3	14	16	■	9	20	3
3	14	17	13	3	■	16	■	12	3	3	8	17
■	17	■	1	18	2	17	9	12	3	■	3	■
22	3	16	12	■	6	15	3	■	18	20	6	17
3	■	5	2	14	3	■	7	16	2	12	■	2
14	20	9	3	■	16	17	22	■	3	6	2	9
■	19	■	17	16	12	20	20	14	17	■	10	■
10	20	17	9	17	■	11	■	16	9	9	2	10
2	14	8	■	9	21	2	14	1	■	11	3	3
9	3	3	9	21	■	14	■	1	13	16	18	6
3	■	2	■	7	■	1	■	3	■	14	■	3
17	13	14	21	16	9	■	16	6	16	1	3	17

ANSWER:

10	16	7	3	18	16	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

A B C D E F ~~G~~ H I J K ~~L~~ M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

ANAGRAM SQUARE SOLUTION, AUG/SEP ISSUE

METAL, AWFUL, CHAOS, APHID, WHOLE

Mystery keyword: MACAW

ANAGRAM THEMED SOLUTION, AUG/SEP ISSUE

TOMATO, PINEAPPLE, OLIVES, ANCHOVIES, OREGANO

Mystery keyword: ONION

BRICK IN THE WALL SOLUTION, AUG/SEP ISSUE

SOLUTION

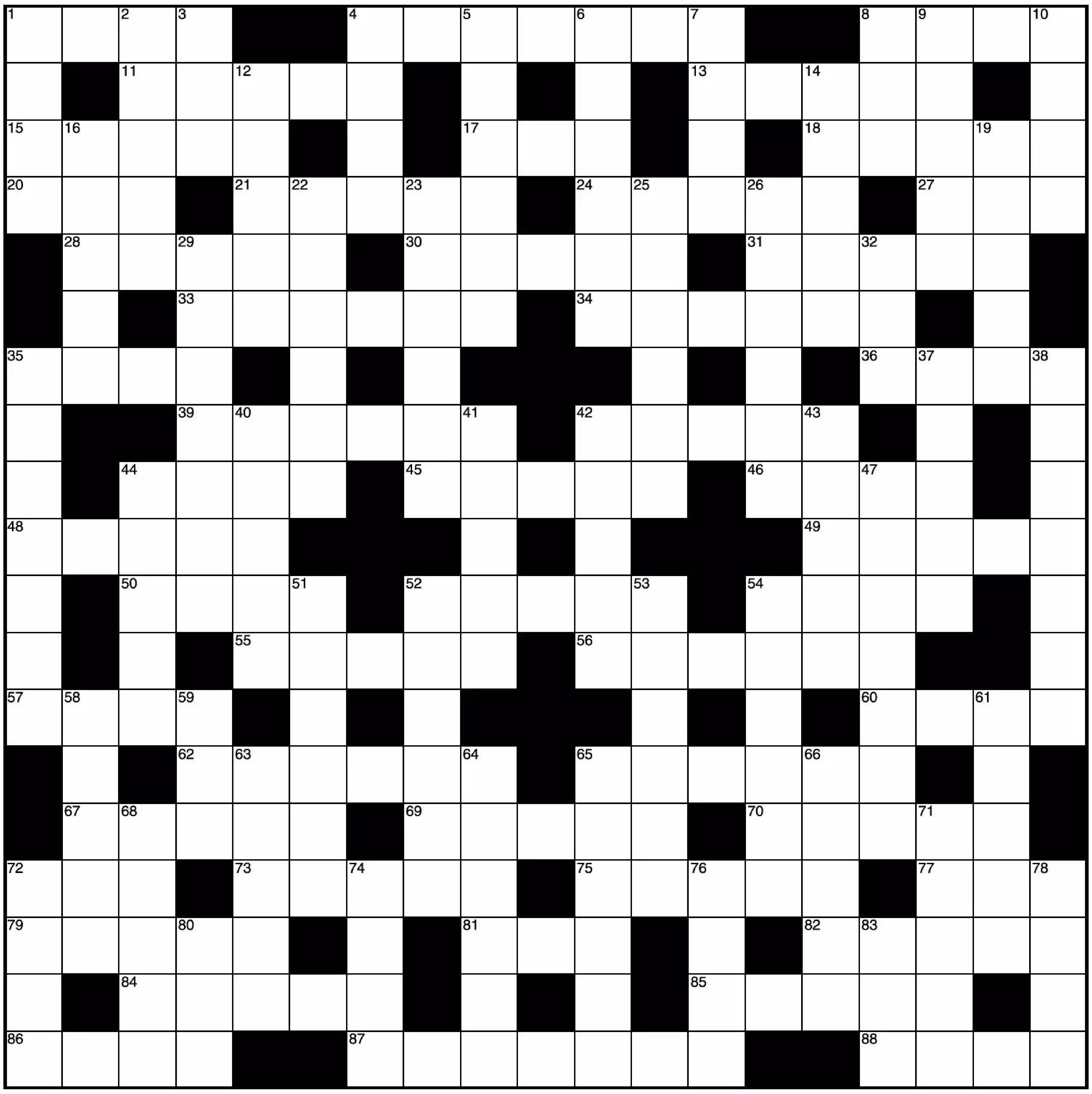
BLEAT, BLEED, BLIND, BLOAT, BREAM, BREAD, BROOM, GLEAM, GLOAT, GLOOM, GREAT, GREED, GREET, GRIND

CODE CRACKER SOLUTION, AUG/SEP ISSUE

SOLUTION: A=16, B=4, C=10, D=6, E=3, F=5, G=1, H=21, I=2, K=8, L=12, M=7, N=14, O=20, P=22, R=18, S=17, T=9, U=13, W=11, Y=15, Z=19

CAMERA

CROSSWORD



J	O	B	S	■	■	M	E	A	T	A	X	E	■	■	I	B	E	X
U	■	L	A	K	S	A	■	N	■	R	■	R	O	T	O	R	■	R
T	B	O	N	E	■	K	■	O	H	M	■	O	■	O	U	I	J	A
S	O	T	■	T	H	E	I	R	■	A	R	S	O	N	■	D	I	Y
■	R	S	P	C	A	■	C	A	N	D	O	■	F	I	D	E	L	■
■	N	■	S	H	R	I	E	K	■	A	L	P	A	C	A	■	T	■
D	E	N	Y	■	R	■	A	■	■	■	L	■	R	■	B	A	S	E
A	■	■	C	L	I	N	G	S	■	R	E	A	M	S	■	G	■	N
B	■	W	H	Y	S	■	E	A	G	E	R	■	S	A	G	E	■	J
B	O	R	E	R	■	■	■	L	■	H	■	■	■	T	A	N	G	O
L	■	E	D	E	N	■	L	A	P	A	Z	■	T	I	L	T	■	Y
E	■	S	■	S	E	W	E	D	■	B	I	K	I	N	I	■	■	E
S	E	T	S	■	A	■	T	■	■	■	P	■	D	■	L	E	A	D
■	X	■	K	A	R	A	T	E	■	S	P	L	I	C	E	■	L	■
■	C	L	Y	D	E	■	E	M	C	E	E	■	E	L	E	C	T	■
C	E	O	■	A	D	O	R	E	■	T	R	A	D	E	■	H	A	G
C	L	A	N	G	■	N	■	R	A	T	■	U	■	F	L	A	R	E
T	■	N	I	E	C	E	■	G	■	E	■	L	U	T	E	S	■	E
V	A	S	T	■	■	S	H	E	A	R	E	D	■	■	D	E	A	D

AUG/SEPT 2025

ACROSS

1. Chores
4. Cleaver
8. Curly-horned alpine goat
11. Malaysian noodle dish
13. Helicopter vane
15. Beef cut (1-4)
17. Measure of resistance
18. Spirit contact board
20. Inebriate
21. Belonging to them
24. Firebug's felony
27. How-to (book) (1,1,1)
28. Pet welfare society (1,1,1,1,1)
30. Positive (attitude) (3-2)
31. Cuba's former president, ... Castro
33. Scream wildly
34. South American mammal
35. Disclaim
36. Plinth
39. Holds onto
42. Oodles
44. Reasons, ... & wherefores
45. Enthusiastic
46. Wise
48. Drilling insect
49. Ballroom favourite
50. Unspoilt paradise
52. Largest Bolivian city (2,3)
54. Lean
55. Did needlepoint
56. Skimpy pool outfit
57. Hardens
60. Starring role
62. Martial art
65. Weave (ropes) together
67. Bonnie's crime partner
69. Function host
70. Choose (government)
72. Managing director (1,1,1)
73. Idolise
75. Exchange
77. Ugly old woman
79. Resonant bell sound
81. Mouse relative
82. Signalling flame
84. Sibling's daughter
85. Medieval guitars
86. Extensive
87. Removed (fleece)
88. Not alive

DOWN

1. Overhangs, ... out
2. Ink smudges
3. California's ... Francisco
4. Build
5. Hooded jacket
6. War fleet
7. Love god
8. I owe you (1,1,1)
9. New wife
10. Skeleton photograph (1-3)
12. Two-masted vessel
14. Stimulant
16. Conveyed
19. Leaves in the lurch
22. Actor, Neil Patrick ...
23. Earth's glacial period (3,3)
25. Castor
26. Family crest, coat ... (2,4)
29. Mentally ready, ... up
32. Apply gently
35. Indulges half-heartedly
37. Rep
38. Savoured
40. Harp-like instruments
41. Tossed greens
42. Detox (centre)
43. Shiny fabric
44. Grab
47. Biblical sea
51. Approached
52. Consonant or vowel
53. Dress fastener
54. Decluttered
58. Outdo
59. Wide blue yonder
61. Sacrificial block
63. Proverb
64. Appear
65. Dog breed, red ...
66. Oral abnormality, ... palate
68. Gives temporarily
71. Pursue
72. Security cameras (1,1,1,1)
74. Singles
76. Song, ... Lang Syne
78. Urged on, ... up
80. Louse egg
83. Piloted

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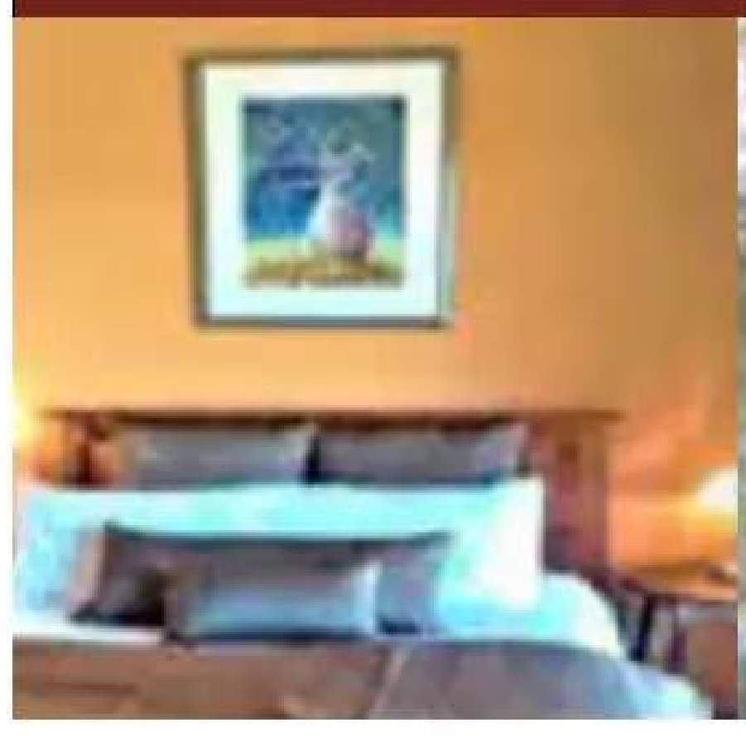

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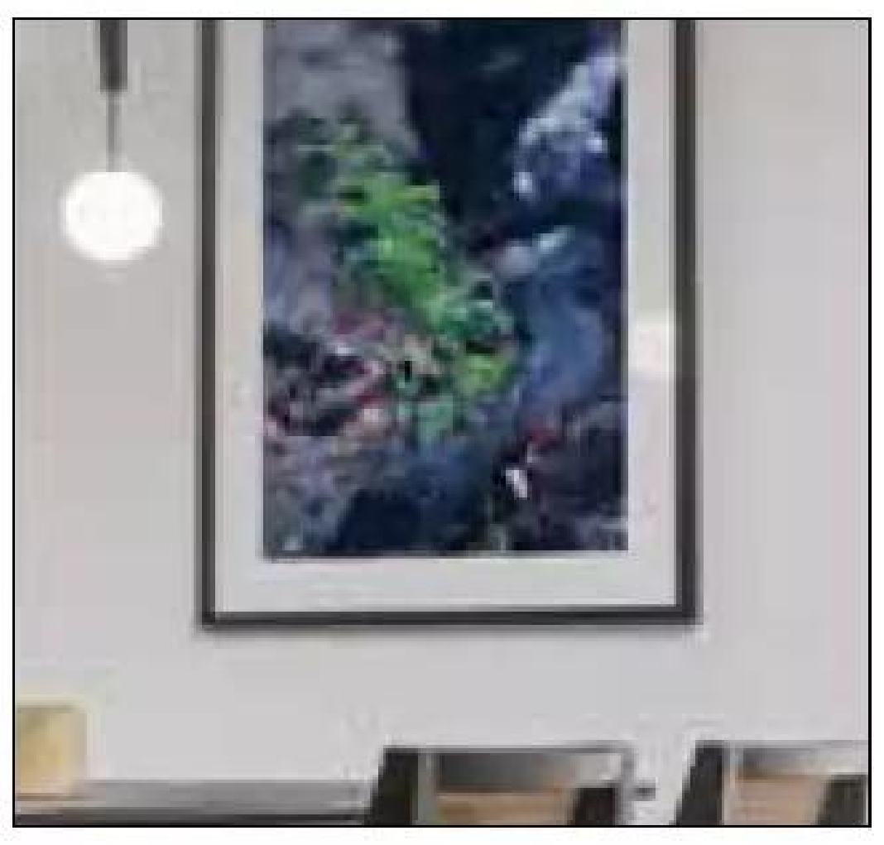

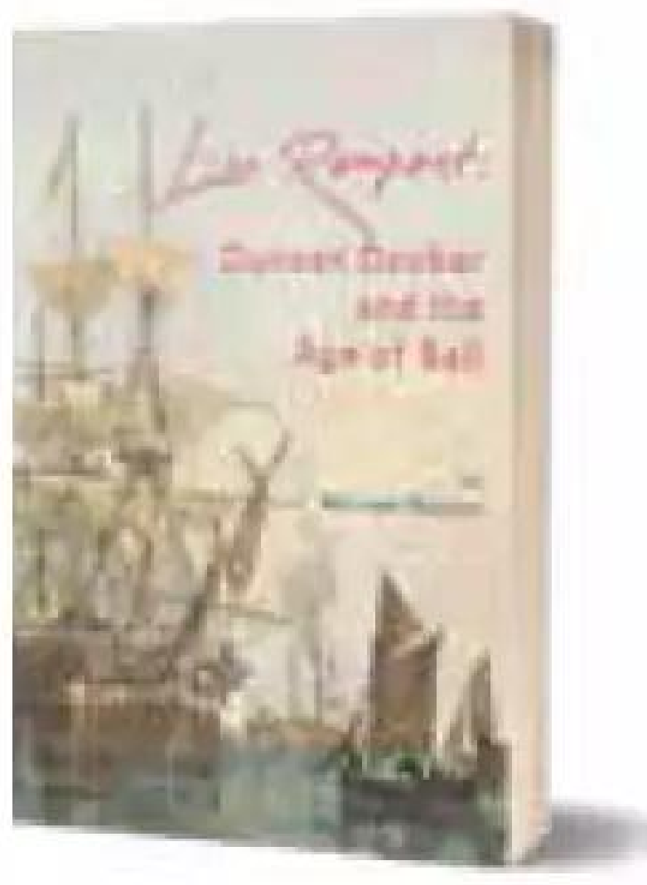

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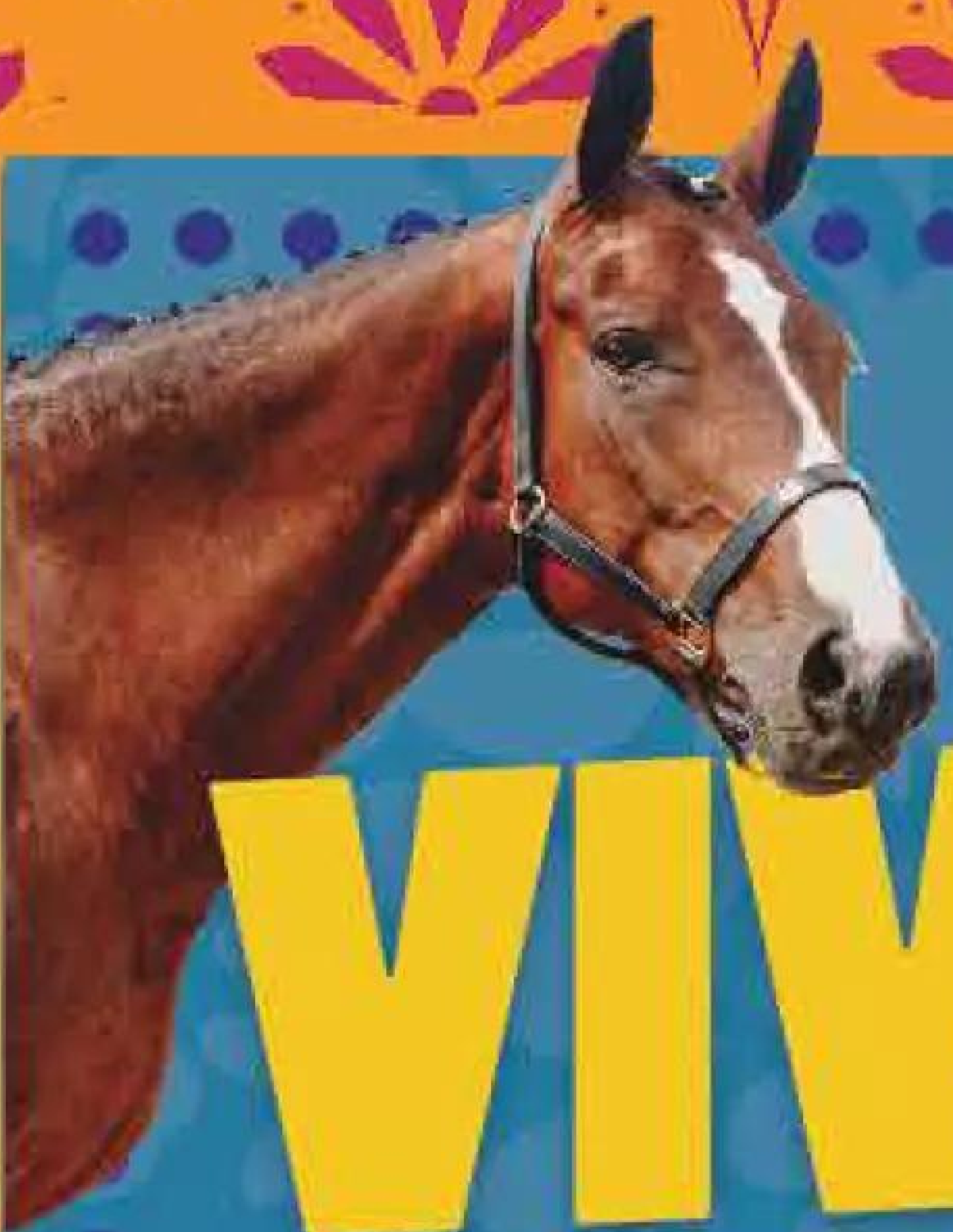

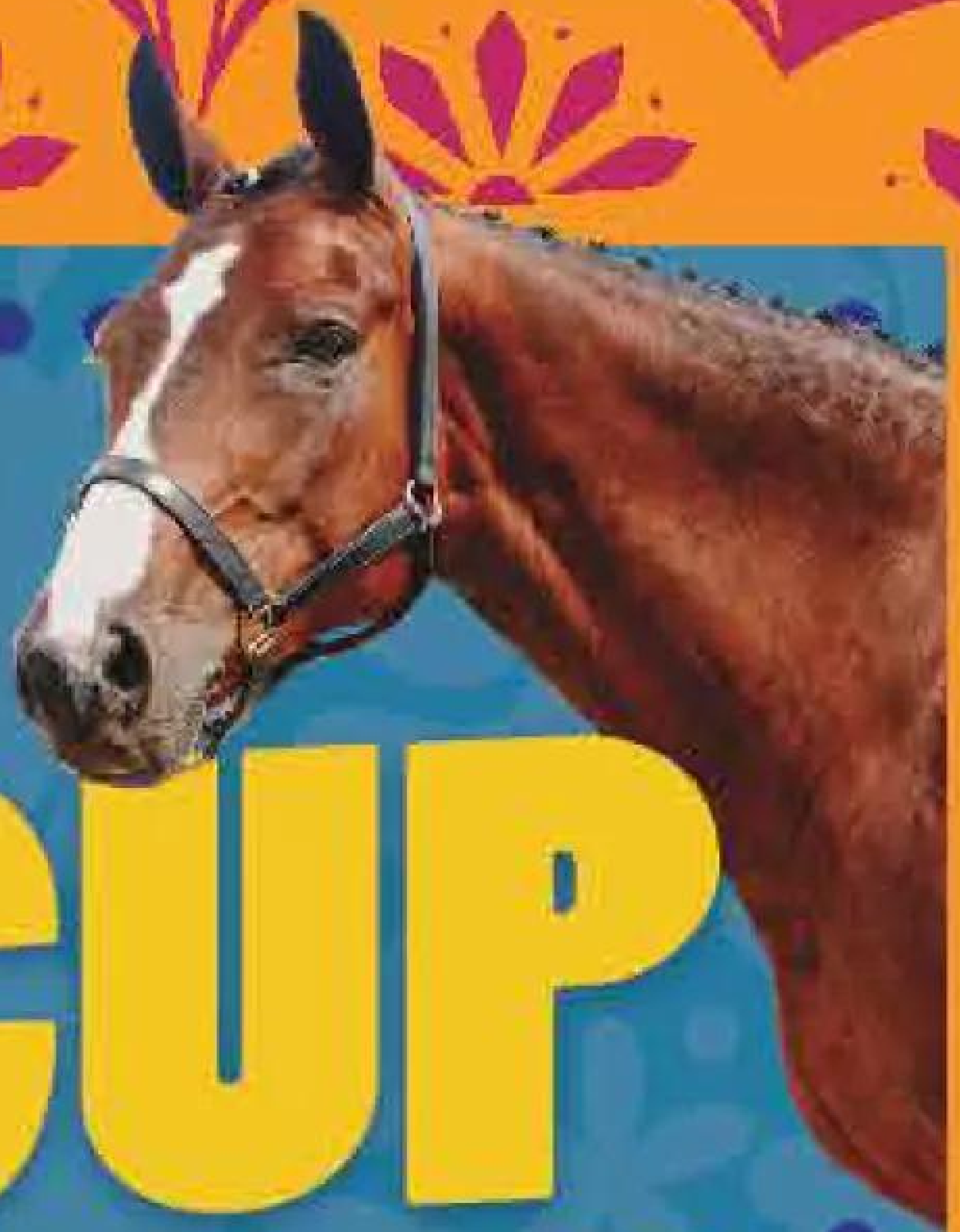

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